**THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY**

**College of Arts and Sciences**

**Middle Eastern Studies**

# THE FORGOTTEN DAUGHTERS: CHILD MARRIAGE IN YEMEN CIVIL WAR

By

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**A Thesis submitted to the**
**Department of Modern Languages**
**and Linguistics**
**in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation**
**with Honors in the Major**

**Degree**
**Awarded:**
**SPRING 2022**

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**Abstract**

Child marriage, a gender-based form of violence, threatens the well-being and health of young women, increasing their vulnerabilities to sexual violence, physical and mental injuries, curtailed education, poverty, and maternal mortality. Beyond these impacts, child marriage has emerged as a major component hindering the national development of Yemen. If there is no end to this practice of early marriage, the social disposition of women will continue to be an obstacle for development. Studies have been conducted on child marriage outside of conflict and, separately, on how conflict impacts the pattern of gender-based violence. However, few have analyzed child marriage during situations of armed conflict. This thesis probes the practice of child marriage in the Yemen Civil War. Two central research questions guided the study: first, has child marriage increased during the Yemen Civil War, and second, what factors contribute to the increase of this practice? The findings suggest that cultural and economic drivers of child marriage are exacerbated during conflict, indicating that child marriage is both a symptom and a solution to the ongoing conflict. Further, data in this paper suggests that an individual's level of education, personal status, and residence impact a woman’s likelihood of becoming a child bride. The thesis concludes with recommendations on how to mitigate the drivers and consequences of early marriage based on the findings.

**Acknowledgments**

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis director and mentor, Dr. Zeina Schlenoff, for her unparalleled encouragement and guidance. Had it not been for her unwavering support and belief in my project, this thesis never would have come to fruition.

In addition to my director, I would also like to thank the rest of my thesis committee, Dr. Amid Ardakani and Dr. Na'ama Nagar, for their generosity with their time and insights.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my parents, Greg and Sandra Richter, for their constant love and support in this project and me.

## Introduction

### Research Topic

*Child Marriage*

International treaties and law define child marriage as a formal or informal marital union with an individual who has not yet reached the age of majority (as recognized by law).[1] Although there is no universal agreement among states as to what constitutes the "age of majority," customary law states that it is 18 years of age. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights condemns forced and early marriage by stating that men and women of "full age" shall enter marriage with the "...free and full consent of intending spouses."[2] This condemnation of early and forced marriage is also echoed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages. Yet, still one-third of women are married before the age of fifteen.[3] Studies done by UNICEF in 2021, predict that in the next decade, 142 million women will enter marriage before their eighteenth birthday.[4]

Although child marriage is a universal phenomenon, scholarship shows that women, as opposed to men, are at a much higher risk of being victimized by this practice. According to statistics presented by *Girls Not Brides,* the prevalence of child marriage among young males is one-sixth that among young women. Further, ten-percent of the world's female population (720

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[1] "Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage." OHCHR. Accessed June 18, 2021. https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/minimumageformarriage.aspx.

[2] "Claiming Human Rights." Article 16. Accessed January 2, 2022. http://claiminghumanrights.org/udhr_article_16.html.

[3] "Child Marriage." UNICEF, March 7, 2021. https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage.

[4] "Child Marriage." UNICEF, March 7, 2021. https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage.

million women) were married as minors compared to 33 million men.[5] Owing to the unequal, harmful power dynamics caused by this custom, young brides are at a much higher risk of sexual harassment, assault, domestic abuse, poor healthcare, and limited education.[6] As a result, this practice is perceived as a form of gender-based violence (GBV), leaving young brides vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and abuse on international and interpersonal levels.[7]

**Research Problem**

This thesis aims to understand the underlying factors of child marriage in Yemen. Elements that will be analyzed include economic and material factors, individual status, and residential area. Investigation of this practice in Yemen is vital for the welfare of the state as well as young Yemeni women. If there is no end to the practice of early marriage, health issues, and the social disposition of women will continue to be obstacles for development.

*Research Questions*

Literature and research agree that GBV increases during periods of conflict. Child marriage, among other GBV, have been reported to increase in times of war; however, few sources evaluate to what extent specific factors influence and impact the rise in child marriage. This thesis aims to answer if

1. child marriage increased during the Yemen Civil War?
2. If so, what factors contribute to the increase of this practice?

Early marriages threaten the well-being and health of the young bride. When women enter marriages before the age of majority, it increases their vulnerabilities to domestic violence,

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[5] "Child Marriage In Humanitarian Contexts." Girls Not Brides , August 2020. https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/documents/959/Child-marriage-in-humanitarian-contexts_August-2020.pdf.

[6] "Child Marriage In Humanitarian Contexts." Girls Not Brides , August 2020. https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/documents/959/Child-marriage-in-humanitarian-contexts_August-2020.pdf.

[7] "Child Marriage." UNICEF, March 7, 2021. https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage.

economic and sexual exploitation, curtailed education, death in childbirth, poverty, etc.[8] Child marriage has various adverse effects on women's physical, mental, and emotional health. According to the International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), women married before the age of 15 are "five times more likely to die in childbirth than women in their 20s and face a higher risk of pregnancy-related injuries such as obstetric fistula."[9] An official data report conducted by The U.S. Justice Department in 2002 surveyed Yemeni women who had been victims of early unions. Their findings revealed that 17.3 percent of Yemeni child brides had experienced sexual assault, 54 percent suffered physical abuse, and 50 percent verbal threats.[10]

In Yemen, the effects of child marriage are not limited to the local level and, in fact, extend to the national level, with various implications for the development, stability, and prosperity of the state.[11] As such, child marriage has emerged as a major component hindering the national development of Yemen.

Due to the increase in this practice, the international community has instituted numerous prevention and response efforts. Multilateral institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations like UNICEF and UNFPA have advocated for the protection of young women and launched the Global Programme to End Child Marriage in 2016.[12] The Millennium Development Goals, an initiative set by the United Nations, outline eight objectives to achieve in the twenty-first

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[8] "Child Marriage." UNICEF, March 7, 2021. https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage.

[9] 'Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa – Yemen Country Brief', United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Middle East and North Africa Regional Office in collaboration with the International Center for Research on Women (IRCW), 2017.

[10] "'How Come You Allow Little Girls to Get Married?"." Human Rights Watch, April 29, 2015. https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/12/07/how-come-you-allow-little-girls-get-married/child-marriage-yemen#.

[11] "Child Marriage." UNICEF, March 7, 2021. https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage.

[12] "Child Marriage." UNICEF, March 7, 2021. https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage.

century. All goals aim to build infrastructure, increase stability, and reduce poverty. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) attributes early marriage as a "factor hindering the capacity to achieve the MDG."[13]

Despite these efforts, child marriage continues to remain a prevalent practice. Current intervention programs are insufficient and lack knowledge and in-depth research on what factors attribute to the rising trend of child brides. In this project, I will analyze these factors in order to suggest effective preventions to end this trend.

## Chapter One

### Myths

Despite widespread condemnation and government intervention, the practice of child marriage continues to persist. A critical step in ending this dangerous practice is to debunk common misconceptions and biases surrounding the practice of early marriage. Outlined in this section are assumptions deemed most relevant to the paper's topic, child marriage in the context of the Developing Third World, more specifically in Yemen.

#### *Child Marriage is a Practice Confined to the Third World*

Child marriage is a global phenomenon. Developed countries such as the United States continue to allow this form of marriage. Before 2017, premature unions were legal in all 50 states.[14] Between 2000 and 2018, 300,000 minors, some as young as ten, entered an early marriage in the United States. These marriages were mostly to older men.[15] As of date, early

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[13] "'How Come You Allow Little Girls to Get Married?"." Human Rights Watch, April 29, 2015. https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/12/07/how-come-you-allow-little-girls-get-married/child-marriage-yemen#.

[14]"Child Marriage – Shocking Statistics." Unchained At Last, November 2, 2021. https://www.unchainedatlast.org/child-marriage-shocking-statistics/.

[15] "Child Marriage – Shocking Statistics." Unchained At Last, November 2, 2021. https://www.unchainedatlast.org/child-marriage-shocking-statistics/.

marriage is legal in 44 states.[16] Still, child marriage occurs more often in the developing world where factors such as poverty, tradition, and instability keep the practice alive.

*Child Marriage is a Religious Problem*

Religion is often cited as a contributing factor to the practice of child marriage; however, these unions are not linked to a single religion. Young women from various religious denominations and regions are victims of this practice. India is home to 40 percent of the world's young brides with the dominant religion being Hindu. In Burkina Faso and Ethiopia, premature unions are entered by Muslims and Christians.[17] Shari'a enforcing states, Algeria and Libya, have relatively low rates of child marriage; whereas Yemen, has high rates of child marriage.[18] Religion does not condone child marriage and no major religion promotes this practice. In fact, religious leaders play a crucial role in tackling child marriage.[19]

In Islam, *fatwas* are legal pronouncements issued by a cleric (religious law specialist) on a given issue.[20] Some Yemeni *fatwas* state that these unions are contrary to the Shari'a (Islamic law based on the Qur'an and the Hadith). Clerics who oppose setting a law on the minimum age for marriage point to Aisha, the third wife of the Prophet Muhammad who was allegedly nine

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[16] "Child Marriage – Shocking Statistics." Unchained At Last, November 2, 2021. https://www.unchainedatlast.org/child-marriage-shocking-statistics/.

[17] "Child Marriage and Religion." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed February 15, 2022. https://www.cfr.org/blog/child-marriage-and-religion-0#:~:text=Religion%20is%20often%20blamed%20for,among%20both%20Muslims%20and%20Hindus.

[18] "Child Marriage and Religion." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed February 15, 2022. https://www.cfr.org/blog/child-marriage-and-religion-0#:~:text=Religion%20is%20often%20blamed%20for,among%20both%20Muslims%20and%20Hindus.

[19] "8 Child Marriage Myths That Need to Go." Girls Not Brides. Accessed February 15, 2022. https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/articles/8-child-marriage-myths-bust-international-womens-day-2017/.

[20] "More than Just a Number: Perspectives on the Age of Aisha (RA)." Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research. Accessed February 16, 2022. https://yaqeeninstitute.org/series/more-than-just-a-number-perspectives-on-the-age-of-aisha.

years old when the union took place.[21] Knowledge of her age was taken from *Sahih al-Bukhari,* an authentic Hadith compiled by Imam Muhammad al-Bukhari.[22] However, even the age of Aisha has been a point of controversy. Many modern Muslim scholars such as Arnold Yasin Mol argue that she was over the age of nine citing from the Hadith *Fath al-Bari*. The hadith states,

*"She was born in Islam approximately eight years before the migration and the Prophet ﷺ passed away when she was approximately eighteen years old."*[23]

What can be deducted is that child marriage is a cultural, not religious issue. Conservative legal scholars point to specific Hadiths that confirm their already present patriarchal biases. Thus, to say that child marriage is an issue confined to religion would be inaccurate.

**Theoretical Framework**

*A Continuum of Violence*

As for the theoretical framework, this thesis will rely on a gender theory that addresses GBV as it relates to conflict stages (before, during, after) known as the continuum of violence.

The continuum of violence, a hypothesis on the cycles of violence, will be applied as interpreted in *A Gender Perspective on War and Peace* written by Cynthia Cockburn. The theory asserts that gender power is "...seen to shape dynamics of every site of human interaction, from

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[21] "More than Just a Number: Perspectives on the Age of Aisha (RA)." Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research. Accessed February 16, 2022. https://yaqeeninstitute.org/series/more-than-just-a-number-perspectives-on-the-age-of-aisha.

[22] "More than Just a Number: Perspectives on the Age of Aisha (RA)." Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research. Accessed February 16, 2022. https://yaqeeninstitute.org/series/more-than-just-a-number-perspectives-on-the-age-of-aisha.

[23] Mol, Arnold Yasin. "Aisha (RA): The Case for an Older Age in Sunni Hadith Scholarship." Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, October 3, 2018. https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/aisha-ra-the-case-for-an-older-age-in-sunni-hadith-scholarship.

the household to the international arena."[24] Gender "...as a relation, and a relation of power, that compounds other power dynamics,"[25] is almost always wedded to conflict and peacemaking and a critical to the structure of the state and nation. As such, it is important to understand gender relations in the context of the socio-political and civil spheres.

The central component to Cockburn's hypothesis is that gender-violence occurs on a *continuum*, present among all phases. As such, it is imperative to analyze forms of gender-based violence as interdependent cases rather than in isolation of one another. These phases include pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict.

The elements of pre-conflict society trace links between gender-based violence in structural violence such as economic systems, occupations, etc. All phases of conflict hinder gender equality and promote "...repressive policies of dictatorial regimes, to armed conflicts."[26] During conflict, gender-based violence is more rampant, with women being vulnerable to various offenses. Although exacerbated, violence in this phase can only function in a setting where there are already present patriarchal attitudes. Each stage has elements independent of the other; however, all phases contend that violence with a gendered component is formed as a result of power dynamics and hierarchies established between the sexes. As such, this paper argues that child marriage "...in war and conflict is thus inseparable from violence, abuse, gender inequality,

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[24] Cockburn, Cynthia. "2. The Continuum of Violence: A Gender Perspective on War and Peace." *Sites of Violence*, 2019, 24–44. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520937055-004.

[25] Cockburn, Cynthia. "2. The Continuum of Violence: A Gender Perspective on War and Peace." *Sites of Violence*, 2019, 24–44. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520937055-004.

[26] Cockburn, Cynthia. "2. The Continuum of Violence: A Gender Perspective on War and Peace." *Sites of Violence*, 2019, 24–44. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520937055-004.

racism, poverty-all of which contribute to the oppression of women in daily life and form a matrix that can exacerbate violence in war."[27]

In the past, wartime sex and gender-based violence were reasoned to be committed by the "sexual urge" of warriors and, an "unfortunate byproduct" of war. However, feminist scholars, such as Cynthia Cockburn, have incorporated a gendered lens to discover that these acts are engrained in the social and political structures which have "normalized 'rape' that stems from lust and want […] and the rape which is evil, inhuman, and connected to brutality and violence."

Cockburn's Continuum of Violence contrasts the Battlefield Deaths concept. Formed in the '60s, the Battlefield Deaths, a statistical measure of violence, has been utilized as the normative approach when assessing the impact of a conflict. The failure of the Battlefield Deaths approach is that it neglects the "harms and forms of systemic violence biased against those individuals and groups who disproportionately experience such violence off the battlefield. These include women and girls, poor people, and disproportionately those living in developing nations."[28] To accurately understand a conflict's nature, concepts that account for those most marginalized, rather than from the perspective of those most powerful (including states among other hegemonic forces) will allow for successful and more inclusive post-conflict peace efforts. Moreover, utilizing a theory that discusses gender and conflict will provide the most accurate analysis and comprehensive understanding of the root causes, triggers, and drivers of GBV. For this paper, child marriage will be the only GBV discussed.

*Intersectionality*

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[27] Heineman, Elizabeth D., ed. *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fhfgp.

[28] Heineman, Elizabeth D., ed. *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fhfgp.

Coupled with the continuum of violence, this thesis will also apply an intersectional approach when researching child marriage in Yemen. The concept of intersectionality, coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, analyzes the interactivity of an individual's identity between various dimensions and factors.[29] The factors include: gender, socioeconomic class, sex, race, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, etc.[30] These identities can further oppress or privilege the individual and shape their experiences and vulnerabilities within the society. In other words, identities do not behave exclusively, but compound each other and produce a matrix of domination.

This theoretical framework, when applied to child marriage, can address which factors contribute to a young girl's vulnerability and risk to face early marriage. An intersectional approach is necessary for various reasons. Gender intersects with other categories of identity which amplify this role in conflict and violence. Therefore, to dismantle oppressive regimes, behaviors, and attitudes that contribute to early marriage among other forms of GBV, an intersectional approach is necessary for successful peacemaking, conflict resolutions, and an end to early marriage.

**Theoretical Issues**

Outlined in this section are existing theories applicable to child marriage in the Developing World. Compared to developed countries, drivers of early marriage in the Third World are unique and exclusive to cultural and economic factors. The selected theories are integral to understanding and extending knowledge regarding the phenomena of early marriage.

*Child Marriage Reinforcing Gender Roles*

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[29] Gopaldas, Ahir. "Intersectionality 101." *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* 32 (2013): 90–94. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43305317.

[30] Gopaldas, Ahir. "Intersectionality 101." *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* 32 (2013): 90–94. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43305317.

Not exclusive to the Developing World is gender stratification and its relation to GBV. Gender stratification refers to the inequalities between men and women in power, privilege, and wealth. Gender a "...socially structured principal…represents a hierarchical, asymmetrical, and unequal division between men and women."[31] This, in conjunction with the patriarchy, forms social norms surrounding the genders which, in turn, form gender roles. These attitudes are enforced in various informal ways. "Gender roles hold that women are to be mothers and wives and men are to be providers for the family unit. Women are deemed to be ready for marriage at an earlier age than men who ought to finish their professional training and ideally be financially secure." GBVs occur in a society where men are privileged, and women are discriminated against based on their gender. The practice of child marriage reinforces the societal assertion which deems women as lesser than their male counterparts and confines them to feminine roles.

Hence, the practice of early marriage is often rooted in gender inequality. Such unions exist because they provide control and/or protection over female sexuality.[32] In Yemen's patriarchal society, a woman's virginity is connected with purity, chastity, and family honor. Therefore, a family will force their daughter to marry to ensure that she remains "intact."

*Child Marriage as an Economic Tool*

The patriarchal assertion that women are 'economic burdens' categorizes them as assets; thus, stripping them of their freedom(s).[33] The international non-profit organization "Girls Not

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[31] Danaj, Ermira. "Gender Stratification." Wiley Online Library. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, March 21, 2016. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781119085621.wbefs261.

[32] Baz, Mira "Yemen: Where Men Marry Children." The World from PRX. Accessed December 11, 2021. https://theworld.org/dispatch/middle-east/100316/child-brides-yemen.

[33] Baz, Mira "Yemen: Where Men Marry Children." The World from PRX. Accessed December 11, 2021. https://theworld.org/dispatch/middle-east/100316/child-brides-yemen.

Brides" highlights how this mindset fosters familial justifications of premature unions. First, young brides can help alleviate the financial burden by leaving their family unit. Such assumptions morph women into tools of financial profit. This sentiment is further emphasized in a report by UNICEF, which states, "in Asia and Africa, the importance of financial transactions at the time of marriage also tends to push families to marry their daughters early." Financial transactions refer to cultural and traditional concepts of dowry, bride price, and dower.

A dowry tradition requires parents to pay the bride's future husband.[34] Factors such as the youth of the bride can affect the 'market value' of the individual and impact the dowry price.[35] A younger child will be worth more due to her purity, virginity, and longer child-rearing years.[36] In a report done by Girls Not Brides, "in communities where a dowry or 'bride price' is paid, it is often a welcome income for poor families; in those where the bride's family pays the groom a dowry, they often have to pay less money if the bride is young and uneducated."[37] As such, families are inclined to marry their young daughter as this would be a more cost-effective way of paying a lower dowry.

The dower refers to when the husband pays for a bride of his choosing, otherwise referred to as 'bride price'.[38] By definition, bride price is "the sum of capital or goods or both used to

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[34] Vroklage, Bernh. "Bride Price or Dower." *Anthropos* 47, no. 1/2 (1952): 133–46. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40449604.

[35] Voinarevich, Olga. "A Fairy Tale Interrupted: The Long-Term Impacts of Child Marriage in Yemen and the Necessart Adjustments to Both Local and International Laws to Stop the Practice and to Protect Voiceless Child Brides," 2015.

[36] Vroklage, Bernh. "Bride Price or Dower." *Anthropos* 47, no. 1/2 (1952): 133–46. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40449604.

[37] "India: Child Marriage Around The World." Girls Not Brides India. 2013. https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/childmarriage/india/

[38] Voinarevich, Olga. "A Fairy Tale Interrupted: The Long-Term Impacts of Child Marriage in Yemen and the Necessart Adjustments to Both Local and International Laws to Stop the Practice and to Protect Voiceless Child Brides," 2015.

purchase a girl for her labor or fertility."[39] According to *Bride Price or Dower*, a bride price "...encourages child marriages because the child's family could potentially make money on the marriage as well as relieve themselves of supporting the child." This arrangement is described as "a transfer of goods."[40] In this context, young girls are viewed as a means of financial gain.

According to the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), there is a clear connection between poverty levels and child marriage. According to UNICEF, "for many poor families, marrying their daughter at an early age essentially is a strategy for economic survival; it means one less person to feed, clothe and educate." The 'one less mouth to feed' claim is an assertion to justify how this practice is used as a tool of survival to lessen the families' financial burden and ensure that the daughter has shelter, food, and protection. The International Center for Research on Women conducted a study on child marriage and poverty levels. Their findings suggest a correlation between household economic status and the age at which the family decides to marry their daughter. The statistics show that young women living in the poorest 20 percent of households are three times more likely to be married as opposed to girls in the richest 20 percent of households.[41]

When poverty is critical, families view child marriage as a way to provide for their daughter's future, and "... her marriage to a much older, sometimes even elderly man is believed to benefit the child and her family both financially and socially. A daughter may be the only

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[39] Vroklage, Bernh. "Bride Price or Dower." *Anthropos* 47, no. 1/2 (1952): 133–46. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40449604.

[40] Vroklage, Bernh. "Bride Price or Dower." *Anthropos* 47, no. 1/2 (1952): 133–46. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40449604.

[41] "Child Marriage Fact Sheet - ICRW." International Center for Research on Women. Too Young to Wed. Accessed February 16, 2022. https://www.icrw.org/files/images/Child-Marriage-Fact-Sheet-Poverty.pdf.

commodity a family has left to be traded and sometimes girls can be used as currency or to settle debts."

As such, this practice often occurs as a result of the family wanting to gain a form of income to alleviate their financial situation, while, simultaneously, allowing their daughter to fulfill the roles that are expected of her.

On the national level, the rates of child marriage are intimately connected to the state's economic development. This explains why in countries with low GDPs the prevalence of this practice is higher than in countries with high GDPs. For example, the United States has a GDP of "$63, 543 per capita with 8.9 percent of young girls in the country being married as minors."[42] Yemen has a GDP of "$824 per capita with 52 percent of young girls in the country being married as minors."[43] Chad has a GDP of "$1,600 per capita, and 71 percent of young girls in the country were married as minors."[44] Further, research from Too Young to Wed shows 40 percent of girls in the poorest countries are young brides, twice the global average.[45]

Two things can be concluded: poverty is a central driving force of premature unions and, girls are the most affected and vulnerable to poverty-driven unions.

*The Impact of Conflict on Early Marriage*

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[42] "United States GDP per CAPITA2021 Data - 2022 Forecast - 1960-2020 Historical." United States GDP per capita - 2021 Data - 2022 Forecast - 1960-2020 Historical. Accessed February 16, 2022. https://tradingeconomics.com/united-states/gdp-per-capita.

[43] "GDP per Capita (Current US$) - Yemen, Rep." Data. Accessed February 16, 2022. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=YE.

[44] "Child Marriage Fact Sheet - ICRW." International Center for Research on Women. Too Young to Wed. Accessed February 16, 2022. https://www.icrw.org/files/images/Child-Marriage-Fact-Sheet-Poverty.pdf.

[45] "Child Marriage Fact Sheet - ICRW." International Center for Research on Women. Too Young to Wed. Accessed February 16, 2022. https://www.icrw.org/files/images/Child-Marriage-Fact-Sheet-Poverty.pdf.

It is assumed that warfare hinders human development including, capital, health, infrastructure, stability, and food security.[46] In particular, civil wars can cause displacement and dislocation of both the economy and society; thus, negatively impacting people and future generations. Armed violence and its impact on both the economic and socio-cultural front create new drivers of child marriage.[47] As explained, child marriage is utilized as an economic tool; thus, when poverty and displacement are prevalent, child marriage will increase.

*Gender-Based Violence in Armed Conflicts*

*"War is fought on the bodies of women."*[48]

Conflicts and disasters are profoundly discriminatory as they do not treat the genders and other marginalized members equally. Women, specifically young women, become the most vulnerable and marginalized in society.[49]

Rachel Mayanka, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary- General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, discussed what she called 'one of history's greatest silences', the "systemic, brutal, and widespread practice of violence against women and girls in armed conflicts." 'One of history's greatest silences' is due to various factors. As already stated, warfare and conflict reinforce masculine and feminine roles in society.[50] In their prescribed gender roles, women are mothers and producers of the nation's citizens. This idealized image of

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[46] Martha Thompson. "Women, Gender, and Conflict: Making the Connections." *Development in Practice* 16, no. 3/4 (2006): 342–53. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4030064.

[47] Martha Thompson. "Women, Gender, and Conflict: Making the Connections." *Development in Practice* 16, no. 3/4 (2006): 342–53. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4030064.

[48] "Rape: Weapon of War." OHCHR. Accessed February 28, 2022. https://www.ohchr.org/en/newsevents/pages/rapeweaponwar.aspx.

[49] "Impact of Conflict on Gender." GSDRC, August 28, 2015. https://gsdrc.org/topic-guides/gender-and-conflict/relationship-between-gender-and-conflict-the-evidence/impact-of-conflict-on-gender/.

[50] Martha Thompson. "Women, Gender, and Conflict: Making the Connections." *Development in Practice* 16, no. 3/4 (2006): 342–53. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4030064.

'bearers of cultural identity' perceive their bodies as "territory to be conquered."[51] In other words, the biological role women play in building the nation makes them vulnerable during conflict. Ethnic nationalism is "[nations] that are defined by a shared heritage, which usually includes a common language, a common faith, and a common ethnic ancestry."[52] During conflicts, warring parties use ethnic cleansing as a way to accomplish ethno-nationalism. This was evident during the Bosnian War when rape, child marriage, among other forms of GBV were employed by the Serbs against the Bosnian-Muslim population as a weapon of ethnic cleansing.[53]

Whenever there is a regression in society such as conflict, gender inequalities will increase. Reiterating Cockburn's continuum of violence, GBV during conflict cannot be viewed in isolation and must be analyzed in conjunction with violence during peacetime. Thus, one can assert that the victimization and constrained agency of women during conflict is largely due to deep-rooted inequalities which inevitably led up to the 'normalized' violence against women as a tactic of warfare. Although men can also be victims of sexual violence during warfare, assault against women during conflict often becomes the accepted norm and holds a gendered tone. Coined by feminist scholars "rape as a weapon" emphasizes the notion that GBVs are normalized and used as a military strategy targeted against women to destroy and instill fear in the population. The Security Council emphasizes this fact in Resolution 1820. It states, "women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war to

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[51] Hansen, Lene. "Gender, Nation, Rape: Bosnia and the Construction of Security." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 3, no. 1 (2000): 55–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740010019848.

[52] Calhoun, Craig. "Nationalism and Ethnicity." *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1993): 211–39. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2083387.

[53] Hansen, Lene. "Gender, Nation, Rape: Bosnia and the Construction of Security." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 3, no. 1 (2000): 55–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740010019848.

humiliate, dominate, instill fear in, and disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group."[54] Former commander of UN peacekeeping forces in the Congo Major General Patrick Cammaert discussed why warring parties resort to sexual abuse as a weapon of warfare. He states, "they destroy communities. You punish the men, and you punish the women, doing it in front of the men. It has probably become more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in armed conflict."[55]

**Literature Review**

Topic: Genders in the Nation and State

*Gender and Nation* by Nira Yuval-Davis outline gendered components that are critical to understanding and analyzing nationalism in relation to women's experiences in conflict. "It is women and not the bureaucracy and intelligentsia who reproduce nations --biologically, culturally, symbolically…"[56] Women symbolize national collectivity and national projects. The important role of women as symbols of the nation's identity "its roots, its spirit, its national project" makes them vulnerable to inequality and GBV.[57] Because a woman is able to produce citizens and populate the nation, it becomes "necessary in the case of the state to regulate and control her sexuality, her body, her reproductive work."[58]

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[54] "Security Council Resolution 1820." PeaceWomen, November 6, 2015. https://www.peacewomen.org/SCR-1820.

[55] "Rape: Weapon of War." OHCHR. Accessed February 28, 2022. https://www.ohchr.org/en/newsevents/pages/rapeweaponwar.aspx.

[56] Yuval-Davis, Nira. "Gender and Nation: Nira Yuval-Davis: Taylor & Francis Group." Taylor & Francis. Taylor & Francis, January 14, 2004. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203169582-5/gender-nation-nira-yuval-davis.

[57] Yuval-Davis, Nira. "Gender and Nation: Nira Yuval-Davis: Taylor & Francis Group." Taylor & Francis. Taylor & Francis, January 14, 2004. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203169582-5/gender-nation-nira-yuval-davis.

[58] Yuval-Davis, Nira. "Gender and Nation: Nira Yuval-Davis: Taylor & Francis Group." Taylor & Francis. Taylor & Francis, January 14, 2004. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203169582-5/gender-nation-nira-yuval-davis.

Cynthia Enole, a feminist scholar and author, discusses the gendered and political intentions of the world around women in her book *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. In her chapter "Nationalism and Masculinity", the author writes:

> In the twenty-first century, nationalist energies have made themselves felt internationally…all of these stories are told as if gender were irrelevant…as if women and men played identical roles in defining and critiquing nationalist goals. Women have served as symbols of the nation violated, the nation suffering, the nation reproducing itself, the nation at its purest.[59]

The experience(s) of women in armed conflict is rarely discussed; thus, the portrayal of child marriage and its consequences in the context of war is oftentimes ahistorical or confined to statistics on a graph. In *Women and Wars: Toward a Conceptual Framework,* Cohn criticizes narratives that fail to provide a gendered perspective on war because "war and gender are, in fact, mutually constitutive."[60] Gender is "a social construction of the masculinities and femininities expected of and available to sexed bodies…[gender] links the constructions and roles and activities expected of and available to women and men."[61] Gender is performative and "*not only* shapes how we experience, understand and represent ourselves as men and women, but which *also* provides a familiar set of metaphors, dichotomous and values which structure ways of thinking about…the world, including war and security."[62]

Cohn further critiques scholarship which confines 'woman' as the sole identity when studying women in conflict. 'Woman' is not a homogenous category "but instead individuals

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[59] Cynthia Enole, "Nationalism and Masculinity", 85-87.

[60] Cohn, Carol, and Cynthia H. Enloe. *Women and Wars*, 23.

[61] Cohn, Carol, and Cynthia H. Enloe. *Women and Wars*, 21.

[62] Cohn, Carol, and Cynthia H. Enloe. *Women and Wars*, 38.

whose identities, options, and experiences are shaped by factors including their age, economic class, race, clan, tribe, caste, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, physical ability, culture, geographic locations…"[63] Favoring an intersectional approach, Cohn emphasizes that women's experiences during war must not be reduced to a monolithic picture of a unified category:

> This is because gender never stands alone as a factor structuring power in a society, but rather is inflected through and constituting of, other hierarchical forms of structuring power, such as caste, race, ethnicity, age, and sexuality. It is the intersections of these structures that produce multiple masculinities and femininities, and concomitant power differentials, *within* each category.[64]

Cohn highlights key components within the patriarchal belief system that set the stage for women's lived experiences within conflict and without conflict. Various dimensions are considered when analyzing what factors shape a woman's experience of war. All of which are situated within "an axis structuring power. She states that the concept of masculinity is deeply ingrained in patriarchal structures. In these structures, 'hegemonic masculinity' is the dominant and glorified expression of this behavior--manliness. This is important when studying war because war is a masculine space and "hinges on disempowering one's opponent, and gender difference encodes power; therefore, manipulating gender can be deployed as a tactic of disempowerment."[65] Cohn states:

> An example of attempted disempowering via targeting a man's manliness, rather than simply the man himself, can be seen in the use of rape of women as a tactic of war. Because a core concept of hegemonic masculinity in most societies is men's control over and protection of their wives and daughters, the rape of male opponents' women can be seen as an effective way of unmanning/disempowering these men.[66]

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[63] Cohn, Carol, and Cynthia H. Enloe. *Women and Wars*, 32.

[64] Cohn, Carol, and Cynthia H. Enloe. *Women and Wars*, 43-46.

[65] Cohn, Carol, and Cynthia H. Enloe. *Women and Wars*, 41.

[66] Cohn, Carol, and Cynthia H. Enloe. *Women and Wars*, 47-49.

Cohn contends that GBVs can be employed as a weapon of war to reduce an opponent's (hegemonic) manliness and simultaneously used as a way to protect women. As the bearer of the nations' citizens, conquering a woman's body is seen as a symbolic act, erasing the community's culture. Because the woman is the (symbolic) body of the motherland/national identity, the "male citizen-soldier must protect her against violation, penetration, and conquest."[67] As stated by previous authors, the nation-as-woman and woman-as-nation may further legitimize and naturalize the use of gender-based violence "to protect women's religious or ethnic purity."[68] In other words, due to the increase of GBVs during times of conflict, a woman is perceived to be safer with the protection of a husband.

Much like Cohn, Cynthia Enole, looks at 'power' and violence focusing on women's experiences in her book. Within armed conflict, Enole discusses how politicized conflict unavoidably morphs into gendered conflict. Interviewing women around the globe, "...they exposed the casual connections between group armed violence and violence perpetrated inside homes and families…they are victims of the international political system…they are the targets of sexual assaults in wartime; they are the trafficked, the low paid, the objectified."[69] Enole asserts that armed conflict intensifies the 'primacy' of male masculinity. In militarized spaces, the 'enactments of manhood' that target women and children are evident.[70] These enactments violate cultural norms and include assault, exploitative practices, sexual violence, and child

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[67] Cohn, Carol, and Cynthia H. Enloe. *Women and Wars*, 49.

[68] Cohn, Carol, and Cynthia H. Enloe. *Women and Wars*, 53.

[69] Enloe, Cynthia H. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of Calif. Press, 2014. 25.

[70] Enloe, Cynthia H. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of Calif. Press, 2014. 68.

marriage. In traditional societies where a woman's virginity is tied to her family honor and where sexual assault is used as a tactic of warfare, the family views the early union as 'protective'.

Maria Thompson discusses the impact of armed conflicts in her article "Women, Gender, and Conflict: Making the Connections." She states:

> Violent conflicts come with a high level of wreckage on lives, property, and survival networks. Armed conflict terrorizes and kills large numbers of people, creates economic dislocation, human and capital flight, massive impoverishment and social breakdown. Thus, making the challenges faced by post-conflict countries more severe than those faced by poor but peaceful developing countries.

Thompson expands on how women are particularly impacted by the destruction during conflict. She states:

> Women are considered vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, sexual slavery, disease, and forced recruitment into armed groups…the idea that war is largely fought by men…and that while violence against civilians is widespread, it is simply an unfortunate by-product of war.[71]

At the heart of conflict induced violence and tactics of warfare is sexual assault and child marriage. Thompson asserts that child marriage in armed conflict is a weapon of warfare, not a means of protection. In essence, forced, early marriage of a young girl is used as a way to legitimize the rape or assault of underage girls to, "...destroy the social tissue of communities, their ability to resist the violence and survive the conflict."[72] Various forms of GBV are oftentimes utilized as a tool of ethnic cleansing by warring parties. Sexual assault and child marriage are strategic tools used to inflict harm on the community and are expressions of male dominance. In other words, often young brides, against the will of their families, are forced to

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[71] Martha Thompson. "Women, Gender, and Conflict: Making the Connections." *Development in Practice* 16, no. 3/4 (2006): http://www.jstor.org/stable/4030064. 350.

[72] Rahman, Famida. "Child Marriage & Conflict: A Weapon of War and Desperation." The Organization for World Peace, December 27, 2017. https://theowp.org/reports/child-marriage-conflict-a-weapon-of-war-and-desperation/.

marry members of armed groups. This is done in an attempt to break the community down and displace populations.

Child Marriage

Enole discusses marriage in her book *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics.* Her book, marriage, as an institution, is used as a political tool to impact the population. Unions affect women's political power in the interpersonal and international realm. In essence, "--[marriage] as an institution and the site of lived experience--have exposed the reliance of militarists and militaries…on sustaining patriarchal marriage…marriage is political, marriage is international."[73] Enole's theory of marriage extends beyond 'normative' unions to discuss child marriage and the broader effects this gendered practice has on young women's autonomy and power. She challenges the existing notion that marriage affects and exists solely in the private or domestic arena:

> The failure to take seriously the thinking behind transnational women's advocacy is itself rooted in unrealistically narrow understandings of "security," "stability," "crisis," and "development". The four concerns is imagined to be divorced from women's unpaid labor, rights within marriage, the denial of girls' education, women's reproductive health, and sexualized and other forms of male violence against women…masculinization of militaries, police forces, and political parties.[74]

Jaombo Tamunoimama a child marriage scholar, affirms Enole's assertion that the norms that devalue women, and force them into early marriage hinder their advancement and growth in a regional and international context.[75] However, unlike Enole, Jaombo discusses this practice as it relates to the Developing World:

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[73]Cynthia Enloe, "Gender Makes the World Go Round," 10.

[74] Cynthia Enole, "Gender Makes the World Go Round", 16.

[75] Singh, Susheela and Renee Samara. "Early marriage among women in developing countries," International Family Planning Perspectives 22, no 4 (1996): 148-75.

Early marriage in many tribes is looked at as a way of protecting the girl, thus the wife is 'protected', or placed firmly under male control; that she is submissive to her husband and works hard for her in-laws' household; that the children she bears are thus legitimate; and that bonds of affection between couples do not undermine the family unit. Parents may genuinely feel that their daughter will be better off and safer with a regular male guardian.

Jaombo highlights many of the anxieties parents experience causing them to marry off their young daughter. These anxieties are driven by cultural and economic factors. When the young bride is married, many believe that she is 'safer' and 'better off', both socially and economically. Culturally, child legitimacy and family units are tied directly to family honor and a woman's virtue. Men are considered to have better potential to provide for the family in the future; thus, they are encouraged to continue their education while young women are confined to learning domestic roles and molding into their prescribed societal role.[76] Thereby leaving a young bride's potential hindered. Jaombo concludes that the long-term physical and psychological implications of early marriage include severe reproductive complications, physical and sexual assault, and potential death.[77]

Both Jaombo and Enole assert that the effects of early marriage translate into the loss of a young girl's identity and qualifications, leaving her vulnerable and unable to progress within society.[78] This can be referred to as the 'feminization of poverty', confining women to roles that

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[76] Jamobo, Tamunoimama. "A Discourse on the Developmental Effects of Child Marriage." African Journal of Social Sciences 2, no. 3 (2012): 135-44.

[77] Jamobo, Tamunoimama. "A Discourse on the Developmental Effects of Child Marriage." African Journal of Social Sciences 2, no. 3 (2012): 135-44.

[78] Singh, Susheela and Renee Samara. "Early marriage among women in developing countries," International Family Planning Perspectives 22, no 4 (1996): 148-75.

leave them without personal growth and autonomy.[79] Simply put, this practice plays an integral role in perpetuating the cycle of poverty and gender inequality.

The literature *Gender and Nation* by Nira Yuval-Davis, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* by Cynthia Enole, and "Women, Gender, and Conflict: Making the Connections" by Maria Thompson, all provide a gender perspective on how social, political, and cultural norms impact the status and power of women in conflict settings. All of these pieces emphasize the notion that while conflict inflicts suffering on all individuals, women are disproportionately impacted by its short and long-term effects. Applying the authors' gender-informed approaches in an attempt to understand the patterns of child marriage in the ongoing Yemen Civil War will yield the most accurate and appropriate analysis of data. In *Women and Wars: Toward a Conceptual Framework,* Cohn incorporates an intersectional approach in her analysis of women and their experiences during conflict. Women are not a homogenous category and are thus not equally impacted in fragile environments. Incorporating an inclusive approach will help obtain the most accurate analysis of this phenomenon and conclude which factors increase women's vulnerability to the practice of early marriage. Jaombo's analysis of child marriage in the Developing World pertains to the paper's case study, child marriage in Yemen. The author's conclusions on early marriage in the Third World and the feminization of poverty identify persistent factors that strongly influence the prevalence of forced and early marriages in Yemen.

## Chapter Two

## Background on Yemen

[79] Jamobo, Tamunoimama. "A Discourse on the Developmental Effects of Child Marriage." African Journal of Social Sciences 2, no. 3 (2012): 135-44.

*Yemen*

*"Once upon a time there was a magical land with legends as astonishing as its houses…A land at the southernmost tip of the Arabian Peninsula, washed by the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean….This country is called Yemen. But, a very long time ago, grown-ups gave it the name Arabia Felix, Happy Arabia…To see Yemen in your mind's eye, imagine a country a little larger than Syria, Greece, and Nepal all rolled into one…Grown-ups say that this Arabia Felix has always been the object of envious desire because of its thousand and one treasures. Foreigners covet its oil; its honey is worth its weight in gold...It has been years and years now since the invaders packed their bags and left, but ever since their departure, Yemen has experienced a series of civil wars too complicated for the pages of children's books."*[80]

Prior to the unification of Yemen on May 22, 1990, the country was divided into North and South Yemen.[81] Its official religion is Islam with followers of the Shafi'i school of Sunni Islam and the Zaydi school of Shiite Islam constituting the majority of the country. With the unification of the state, the Zaydi system of Imams collapsed, and the Salafis (a branch of Sunni Islam) ran the government with hopes of attracting followers.[82] The Salafi government was hostile towards the Zaydi faction. Thus, the Yemeni government's aggression towards this sect can be traced back to the unification of the state. Up until the current conflict, there have been six previous phases of war spanning throughout the century.[83]

Each civil war involved an ideological clash; however, placing blame solely on sectarian differences would be a reductionist view. While sectarian identity is associated with the makeup

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[80] Ali , Nujood. *I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced*. Paw Prints, 2011, 7.

[81] Doostmohammadi, Ahmad, Seyyed Abdolazim Mousavi, and Javad Amani Sari Beigloo. "A Study of the Causes of Wars between the Government and the Shiites of Yemen Based on 'Fuzzy Cognitive Maps.'" *Journal of International and Area Studies* 19, no. 1 (2012): 97–114. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43111508.

[82] Doostmohammadi, Ahmad, Seyyed Abdolazim Mousavi, and Javad Amani Sari Beigloo. "A Study of the Causes of Wars between the Government and the Shiites of Yemen Based on 'Fuzzy Cognitive Maps.'" *Journal of International and Area Studies* 19, no. 1 (2012): 97–114. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43111508.

[83] Doostmohammadi, Ahmad, Seyyed Abdolazim Mousavi, and Javad Amani Sari Beigloo. "A Study of the Causes of Wars between the Government and the Shiites of Yemen Based on 'Fuzzy Cognitive Maps.'" *Journal of International and Area Studies* 19, no. 1 (2012): 97–114. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43111508.

of Yemen and its conflict, there are several factors that further explain the social makeup and identity of the Yemeni people. Internal and external factors include: the country's tribal social structure, economic power, underdeveloped political systems, lack of pluralism within the government, and foreign involvement and interference.

*The War in Yemen*

The conflict officially began in 2014; however, tensions began in 2011 when Yemen, among other states, was impacted by the Arab Spring.[84] In November of 2011, Yemen, with the aid of the United States, the United Kingdom, and other international participants, elected Abd Rabuh Mansur Hadi as interim president.[85] The Houthis were critical of the decision as Hadi was a Sunni from Southern Yemen and the former vice president of Ali Abdullah Saleh, a president they accused of being corrupt.[86] The Houthis reside in Northern Yemen and are Zaydi Shiites, or *Zaydiyyah*.[87] The Zaydi's are a minority group within Islam who differ from the Twelver Shiites who live in Iran. It is estimated that they make up 30 percent of the Yemen population and 8 percent of the Shiite population.[88] The Zaydi's commemorate the great grandson of Ali, Zayd bin Ali. Throughout his life, Zayd fought against political corruption such as the Umayyads, leading

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[84] "War in Yemen | Global Conflict Tracker." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed February 22, 2022. https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-yemen.

[85] FEIERSTEIN, GERALD. "Is There a Path Out of the Yemen Conflict?: Why It Matters." *PRISM* 7, no. 1 (2017): 16–31. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26470495.

[86] FEIERSTEIN, GERALD. "Is There a Path Out of the Yemen Conflict?: Why It Matters." *PRISM* 7, no. 1 (2017): 16–31. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26470495.

[87] KIYICI, HAKAN. Review of *Yemen in the International Security Agenda: The Context of Tribalism, Sectarianism, and Intervention*, by Marieke Brandt, Ginny Hill, Amanda Guidero, and Maia C. Hallward. *Insight Turkey* 22, no. 1 (2020): 237–45. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26921177.

[88] "War in Yemen | Global Conflict Tracker." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed February 22, 2022. https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-yemen.

a revolt against the Islamic dynasty. Revering the life of Zayd, the Houthis have made fighting unjust and corrupt governments their focal point.[89]

In 2014, the Houthis took control of Yemen's capital, Sana'a. Their demands included lower fuel levels and a new government with the end of Hadi's presidency. In Sana'a, the government raised fuel prices from $0.58 to $0.93 a liter. Through a series of failed negotiations, the Houthi rebels seized the presidential palace in January 2015.[90] This led to the resignation of President Abd Rabbu Mansur Hadi. With the assistance of Iran, the Houthi forces were able to take Hodeidah, a port city on the Red Sea.[91] To prevent the militant group from controlling the country, the Saudis intervened militarily and led a coalition of Gulf States to air strike and isolate the Houthis by placing a naval blockade on all Houthi-controlled territory. The coalition forces relied heavily on airpower, all of which was accomplished with the assistance of U.S. and U.K. support.[92] During these attacks, the militant group blended in with the local population, causing the injury and death of thousands of Yemeni people during intended Saudi attacks. The war is still ongoing. The Houthi rebels are being supplied with weaponry by Iran who, according to former Secretary of State John Kerry, is sending, "...a number of flights every single week."[93] The financial burden caused by the conflict has negatively impacted both sides on various fronts.

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[89] KIYICI, HAKAN. Review of *Yemen in the International Security Agenda: The Context of Tribalism, Sectarianism, and Intervention*, by Marieke Brandt, Ginny Hill, Amanda Guidero, and Maia C. Hallward. *Insight Turkey* 22, no. 1 (2020): 237–45. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26921177.

[90] "War in Yemen | Global Conflict Tracker." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed February 22, 2022. https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-yemen.

[91] "War in Yemen | Global Conflict Tracker." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed February 22, 2022. https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-yemen.

[92] FEIERSTEIN, GERALD. "Is There a Path Out of the Yemen Conflict?: Why It Matters." *PRISM* 7, no. 1 (2017): 16–31. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26470495.

[93] FEIERSTEIN, GERALD. "Is There a Path Out of the Yemen Conflict?: Why It Matters." *PRISM* 7, no. 1 (2017): 16–31. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26470495.

For Saudi Arabia, the estimated cost is 5 billion dollars. Moreover, the Saudis report that they have spent more than $8.2 billion in humanitarian assistance from 2015-17.[94] The intervention of regional powers in the conflict has drawn the country into a broader Sunni-Shia divide. Both sides are credibly accused of war crimes.[95]

The conflict in Yemen has been categorized as a civil war and proxy war. Proxy wars are conflicts in which regional powers are involved in the conflict. Oftentimes, multiple states can back proxies. This can be seen in the Yemen Civil War with Saudi Arabia and Iran fighting an ideological battle for power and regional domination in the fragile state. Proxy wars contribute to humanitarian crises around the world as these types of conflicts are prolonged due to aid, weaponry, money, intelligence, etc.[96] The conflict in Yemen has exacerbated poverty, famine, displacement, increase in GBV, among others.

*The Impact*

The conflict in Yemen has arguably grown into one of the largest humanitarian crises. According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), the "highly indiscriminate targeting" of Yemeni civilians by coalition forces, has made the Saudi-led forces the actor "most responsible for civilian deaths."[97]As a result, the highest fatalities occurred in

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[94] FEIERSTEIN, GERALD. "Is There a Path Out of the Yemen Conflict?: Why It Matters." *PRISM* 7, no. 1 (2017): 16–31. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26470495.

[95] "War in Yemen | Global Conflict Tracker." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed February 22, 2022. https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-yemen.

[96] FEIERSTEIN, GERALD. "Is There a Path Out of the Yemen Conflict?: Why It Matters." *PRISM* 7, no. 1 (2017): 16–31. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26470495.

[97] Matthias SulzMatthias J. Sulz is the Gulf Research Manager at ACLED. He joined in 2017 and oversees data collection and analysis in Yemen, Author: and Matthias J. Sulz is the Gulf Research Manager at ACLED. He joined in 2017 and oversees data collection and analysis in Yemen. "Yemen Snapshots: 2015-2019." ACLED, February 26, 2020.

regions occupied by the Houthi rebels such as the Taiz governorate which was reported as "by far the most violent governorate."[98] Following Taiz in conflict severity is the Hodeidah governorate where "indiscriminate attacks against civilians and the nature of city combat, however, makes the conflict for civilians in Hodeidah governorate five times as lethal."[99] Data provided by ACLED indicates that as of 2019, the deadliest year of the conflict was in 2018, as the figure below indicates. The "lethality in armed confrontations during that time can be traced back to the deadly Hodeidah offensive by UAE-supported Yemeni forces to reconquer the port of Hodeidah from the Houthi Movement."[100] Due to the conflict's nature, efforts to obtain data in 2020 and after were limited.

[98] Matthias SulzMatthias J. Sulz is the Gulf Research Manager at ACLED. He joined in 2017 and oversees data collection and analysis in Yemen, Author: and Matthias J. Sulz is the Gulf Research Manager at ACLED. He joined in 2017 and oversees data collection and analysis in Yemen. "Yemen Snapshots: 2015-2019." ACLED, February 26, 2020.

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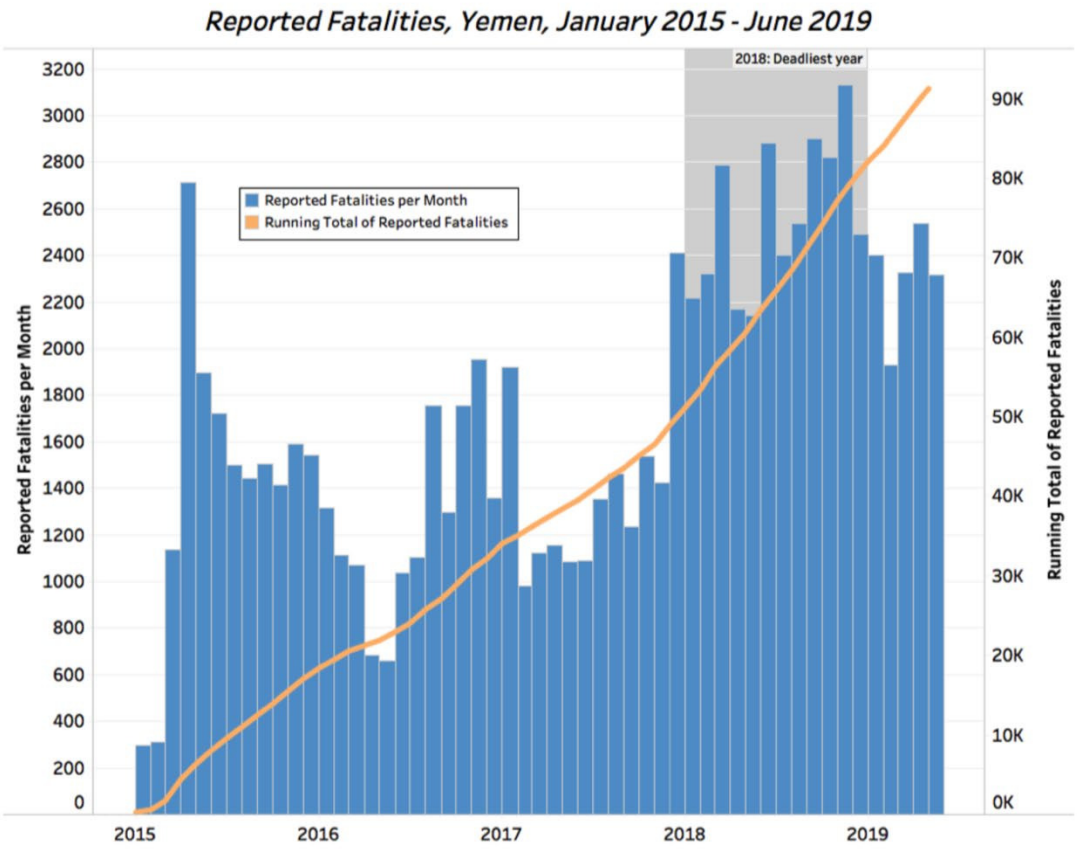
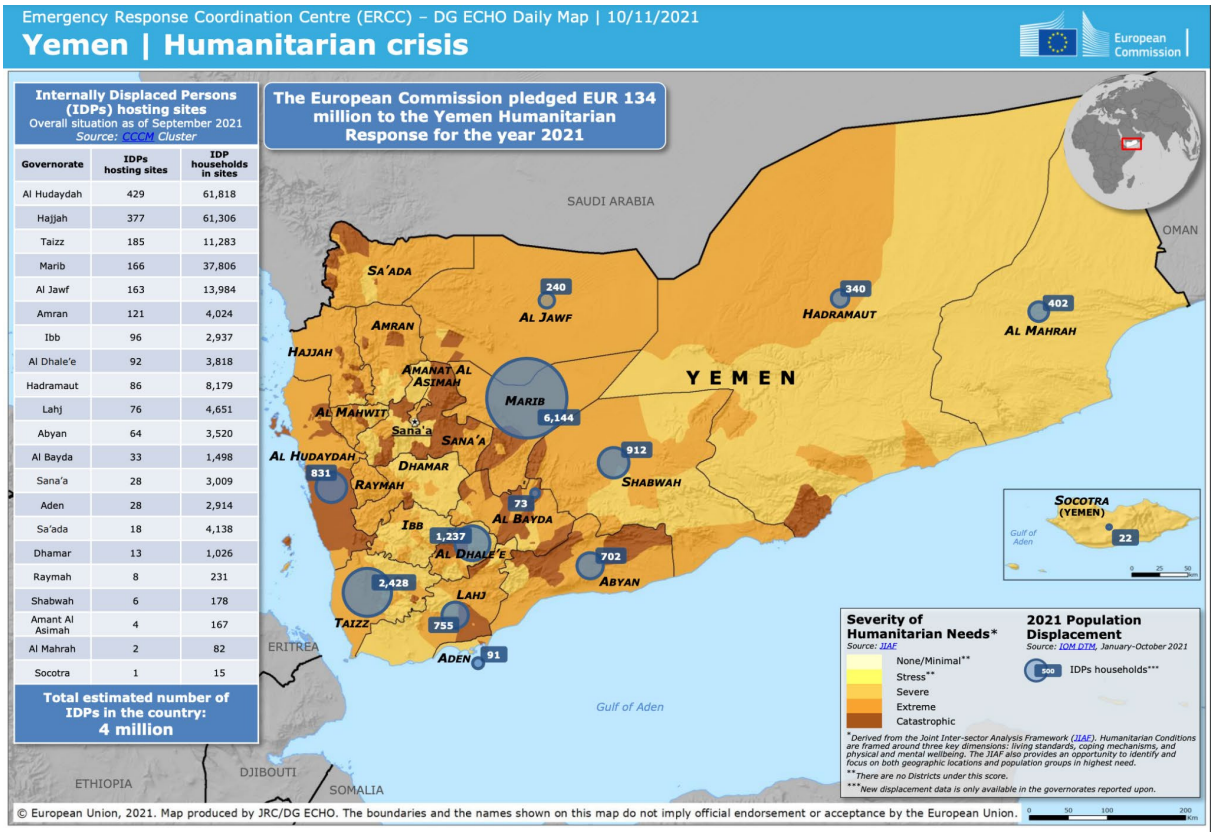
[100] Matthias SulzMatthias J. Sulz is the Gulf Research Manager at ACLED. He joined in 2017 and oversees data collection and analysis in Yemen, Author: and Matthias J. Sulz is the Gulf Research Manager at ACLED. He joined in 2017 and oversees data collection and analysis in Yemen. "Yemen Snapshots: 2015-2019." ACLED, February 26, 2020.




In a statement to the Security Council on February 15, 2022, Martin Griffiths stated, "The war in Yemen…and the wider crisis it has unleashed, as we have heard…continue to threaten millions of lives across the country. And for now, that crisis shows no sign of abating…we have seen over the last six weeks a sharp and dangerous escalation in conflict, with devastating consequences for civilians and civilian infrastructure…More than 650 civilian casualties were reported in January. That means, on average, 21 civilians killed or injured every day by air strikes, shelling, small-arms fire and other violence. It is, by far, the highest toll in at least three years."[101]

[101] "Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Martin Griffiths - Statement to the Security Council on Yemen, 15 February 2022 - Yemen." ReliefWeb. Accessed February 22, 2022. https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/under-secretary-general-humanitarian-affairs-and-emergency-relief-coordinator-mr-0.

The conflict has displaced millions with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) projecting that there are 4 million internally displaced Yemeni people as of 2021.[102] The graph below shows the severity of humanitarian needs in all of Yemen's 333 districts ranging from severe to catastrophic. Data discussing the conflict's impact on IDPs is shown below.




*Economics*

[102] "Crisis in Yemen: Protracted Conflict Pushes Yemenis Deeper into Need." International Rescue Committee (IRC), January 21, 2022. https://www.rescue.org/article/crisis-yemen-protracted-conflict-pushes-yemenis-deeper-need#:~:text=%E2%80%9CYemen%20is%20still%20one%20of,and%20development%20manager%20Ebtihal%20Ghanem.

Yemen is one of the poorest Arab countries.[103] Their monetary unit is the riyal which is used in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The value of the riyal continues to decline, pushing people further into poverty. As of 2022, the riyal is equivalent to .0040 United States dollars when, in 2012, the riyal was equivalent to 8 United States dollars.[104] During the unification of North and South Yemen, the convergence of their command economics emphasized the difference between the two. Yemen has sufficient oil and gas reserves allowing it to use oil for domestic demand and exports.

Prior to the conflict, critical infrastructure, corruption, and underdevelopment were issues; however, the systemic impact of the war has formed a core challenge in Yemen. The current conflict has heavily impacted the capacity and ability to provide essential services to the Yemeni people. As the conflict and blockades have continued, the Yemeni population has suffered from a lack of proper healthcare, economy, destroyed infrastructure, instability, etc.[105] As of January 2022, it is estimated that 229 schools and 148 hospitals have been damaged as a result of the conflict.[106]With humanitarian access heavily restricted in many areas, aid organizations' ability to meet Yemenis' needs is constrained."[107] Figures presented by the

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[103] World Bank Group. "Yemen's Economic Update - October 2021." World Bank. World Bank Group, October 14, 2021. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/publication/economic-update-october-2021.

[104] World Bank Group. "Yemen's Economic Update - October 2021." World Bank. World Bank Group, October 14, 2021. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/publication/economic-update-october-2021.

[105] World Bank Group. "Yemen's Economic Update - October 2021." World Bank. World Bank Group, October 14, 2021. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/publication/economic-update-october-2021.

[106] "Crisis in Yemen: Protracted Conflict Pushes Yemenis Deeper into Need." International Rescue Committee (IRC), January 21, 2022. https://www.rescue.org/article/crisis-yemen-protracted-conflict-pushes-yemenis-deeper-need#:~:text=%E2%80%9CYemen%20is%20still%20one%20of,and%20development%20manager%20Ebtihal%20Ghanem.

[107] "Crisis in Yemen: Protracted Conflict Pushes Yemenis Deeper into Need." International Rescue Committee (IRC), January 21, 2022. https://www.rescue.org/article/crisis-yemen-protracted-conflict-pushes-yemenis-deeper-need#:~:text=%E2%80%9CYemen%20is%20still%20one%20of,and%20development%20manager%20Ebtihal%20Ghanem.

International Rescue Committee's report show that of the 30.5 million people residing in Yemen, 20.7 million are in need of humanitarian aid and 15.6 million are living in extreme poverty.[108] Millions are without access to safe and clean water causing people to drink contaminated water resulting in "high outbreaks of cholera, diphtheria, measles, and Dengue Fever."[109] It is estimated that more than 40 percent of Yemeni households are unable to afford the minimum amount of food.[110] Seventy-five percent of the population live in poverty.[111]

Employees such as doctors, and teachers, among other government and civil employees, have not obtained a salary for years. In the south, inflation is growing with the riyal (Yemen's currency) having increased 140 percent since the start of the year. A report by the OCHA ReliefWeb stated that "[UNHCR] field staff are observing an increase in the number of families resorting to harmful coping mechanisms to make ends meet. As the prices of basic goods and cooking gas continue to rise due to the devaluation of the Yemeni Riyal in the south and the fuel shortage in the north, UNHCR field staff are registering an increasing number of families resorting to begging for food and assistance.[112] In February 2022, ten children were reported to

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[108] "Crisis in Yemen: Protracted Conflict Pushes Yemenis Deeper into Need." International Rescue Committee (IRC), January 21, 2022. https://www.rescue.org/article/crisis-yemen-protracted-conflict-pushes-yemenis-deeper-need#:~:text=%E2%80%9CYemen%20is%20still%20one%20of,and%20development%20manager%20Ebtihal%20Ghanem.

[109] World Bank Group. "Yemen's Economic Update - October 2021." World Bank. World Bank Group, October 14, 2021. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/publication/economic-update-october-2021.

[110] World Bank Group. "Yemen's Economic Update - October 2021." World Bank. World Bank Group, October 14, 2021. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/publication/economic-update-october-2021.

[111] World Bank Group. "Yemen's Economic Update - October 2021." World Bank. World Bank Group, October 14, 2021. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/publication/economic-update-october-2021.

[112] World Bank Group. "Yemen's Economic Update - October 2021." World Bank. World Bank Group, October 14, 2021. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/publication/economic-update-october-2021.

either beg or be engaged in child labor in Sana'a governorate."[113] Juliette Touma, UNICEF spokeswoman, stated, "[Yemen] is one of the worst places to be a child. It's probably safe to say that right now no place is safe for children in Yemen…the safety and protection of the children has deteriorated…because of the relentless violence against children."[114]

*Social Structure of Yemen*

*"Yemen's head of state is a president…but power in the country lies also with tribal chiefs in turbans who wield enormous authority in the villages, whether it's a question of arms sales, marriage, or the commerce and culture of khat."*[115]

Yemen's social structure is tribal making the identities of people defined within a clan framework.[116] *Qabayla,* or tribalism, functions as both the method of social organization and way in which people communicate. It is estimated that 70-80 percent of Yemeni society is tribelike.[117] For humanitarian workers, understanding the social makeup of Yemen is imperative in order to conduct proper peacekeeping missions and institutions in areas where Western state institutions are weak and/or absent.

The tribal identity is multilayered, consisting of several structures and units. At the lowest level are 'tribesmen' or adult men who share a common territory and some form of common ancestry. This importance of land is unique to Yemeni tribalism in which the *qaba'il*

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[113] "Yemen: UNHCR Operational Update, Covering the Period 1 - 10 February 2022 - Yemen." ReliefWeb. Accessed February 22, 2022. https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-unhcr-operational-update-covering-period-1-10-february-2022.

[114] (www.dw.com), Deutsche Welle. "In Yemen, 'Nearly All Children' at Risk from War: DW: 10.08.2018." DW.COM. Accessed March 6, 2022. https://www.dw.com/en/in-yemen-nearly-all-children-at-risk-from-war/a-45040298.

[115] Ali , Nujood. *I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced*. Paw Prints, 2011, 9.

[116] Doostmohammadi, Ahmad, Seyyed Abdolazim Mousavi, and Javad Amani Sari Beigloo. "A Study of the Causes of Wars between the Government and the Shiites of Yemen Based on 'Fuzzy Cognitive Maps.'" *Journal of International and Area Studies* 19, no. 1 (2012): 97–114. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43111508.

[117] "Tribes in Yemen - ACAPS." Accessed February 23, 2022. https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20200813_acaps_thematic_report_tribes_in_yemen_0_0.pdf.

*"*...exhibit a particularly strong attachment to and identification with "their" territories."[118] This fact is expressed in a Yemeni proverb which states--"the pride/prestige of a *qabila* is [in] his land."[119] The highest structure is the tribal confederation, in which several tribes unite to ally. Kinship is foundational to the tribe as clans are constructed through alliances and are represented by a *Shaykh.* The *Shaykh* is an individual revered for his ability to "problem solve and conduct arbitrations."[120] In the tribal confederation, there are several *Shaykhs*. The makeup of the tribes is strategic for purposes of war in the case of offense or defense. A majority of the Yemeni tribesmen are farmers and/or landowners. Tribesmen are the only social group allowed to be armed. Because of their ability to bear weapons and their majority, they dominate the political, economic and socio-cultural spheres.[121]

Communication and social norms are highly ritualized and patriarchal.[122] This idea is reflected in the tribe's rigid social orders. As previously stated, tribesmen are the only members allowed to bear arms. Weapons are tools of protection and symbolism, oftentimes mixing the two. The *janbiyya,* a Yemeni dagger, is always carried by the tribesman to reflect his strength

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[118] Salmoni, Barak A., Bryce Loidolt, and Madeleine Wells. "The Sociocultural Ecology of the Huthi Conflict: Tribalism and Religion." In *Regime and Periphery in Northern Yemen: The Huthi Phenomenon*, 45–78. RAND Corporation, 2010. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg962dia.12.

[119] Salmoni, Barak A., Bryce Loidolt, and Madeleine Wells. "The Sociocultural Ecology of the Huthi Conflict: Tribalism and Religion." In *Regime and Periphery in Northern Yemen: The Huthi Phenomenon*, 45–78. RAND Corporation, 2010. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg962dia.12.

[120] Salmoni, Barak A., Bryce Loidolt, and Madeleine Wells. "The Sociocultural Ecology of the Huthi Conflict: Tribalism and Religion." In *Regime and Periphery in Northern Yemen: The Huthi Phenomenon*, 45–78. RAND Corporation, 2010. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg962dia.12.

[121] "Tribes in Yemen - ACAPS." Accessed February 23, 2022. https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20200813_acaps_thematic_report_tribes_in_yemen_0_0.pdf.

[122] "Tribes in Yemen - ACAPS." Accessed February 23, 2022. https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20200813_acaps_thematic_report_tribes_in_yemen_0_0.pdf.

and ability to protect.[123] Four elements are in constant need of protection: "land (*ardh*)/property (*haqq*), blood, (*dima*), and a woman's integrity (*irdh*)*."*[124] Those who carry weapons are 'strong' and the protectors of the tribe, and those who cannot are 'weak' and in need of the tribe's protection.[125] Women are in the latter category and thus, are dependents of the tribe, falling under its permanent protection. Reflected within greater Yemeni society, a woman's position in the tribe is characterized by a great deal of gender segregation. This division is defined by the tribesmen who outline behavior that is permissive/impermissible between the sexes. In tribes, the institution of marriage reflects a person's social order and is used as a way to establish kinship.

Although important throughout the state, the strength of tribalism is not homogenous and varies. Modern technology, migrations to the city, and developments to the state, have all impacted traditional social roles, and, in turn, have impacted the role of tribalism.[126] Despite this fact, the foundations of *qabayla* remain strong, especially in rural areas.

*Women in Yemen*

*"By God, I am broken from the inside. It's not normal, I don't feel like a human being. I can't breathe properly like other human beings. We suffer from the forced niqab, child marriage, divorce shame, domestic violence and honor killings. I don't know… as if we are aliens. They*

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123 "Tribes in Yemen - ACAPS." Accessed February 23, 2022. https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20200813_acaps_thematic_report_tribes_in_yemen_0_0.pdf.

124 "Tribes in Yemen - ACAPS." Accessed February 23, 2022. https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20200813_acaps_thematic_report_tribes_in_yemen_0_0.pdf.

125 "Tribes in Yemen - ACAPS." Accessed February 23, 2022. https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20200813_acaps_thematic_report_tribes_in_yemen_0_0.pdf.

126 "Tribes in Yemen - ACAPS." Accessed February 23, 2022. https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20200813_acaps_thematic_report_tribes_in_yemen_0_0.pdf.

*[male family members] have to oppress us and we have to stay oppressed – like a puppet controlled by strings."*[127]

This is what an unnamed Yemeni woman told a member of the Yemen Team at Amnesty International.

Historically, women in Yemen have suffered immense gender inequality. Prior to the current conflict, the country ranked 142 out of 142 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap index. As of 2019, the trend of last place remained for 13 consecutive years.[128] For the purposes of the thesis, child marriage will be the only gender-based violence analyzed. Yemen has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world and is considered a "hot spot" for this practice.[129] This can be attributed to societal and cultural attitudes and legislation that fortify well-settled gender traditions such as child marriage.

*Social Norms*

Social norms are "rules and standards that are understood by members of a group, and guide or constrain social behaviors without the force of law."[130] Although informal, these attitudes define how members of a community behave among one another.

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[127] "Yemen: One of the Worst Places in the World to Be a Woman." Amnesty International, October 11, 2021. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/12/yemen-one-of-the-worst-places-in-the-world-to-be-a-woman/.

[128] "Yemen: One of the Worst Places in the World to Be a Woman." Amnesty International, October 11, 2021. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/12/yemen-one-of-the-worst-places-in-the-world-to-be-a-woman/.

[129] "UNICEF." Accessed January 2, 2022. https://www.unicef.org/media/88851/file/Child-marriage-Yemen-profile-2019.pdf.

[130] Dempsey, Robert C., John McAlaney, and Bridgette M. Bewick. "A Critical Appraisal of the Social Norms Approach as an Interventional Strategy for Health-Related Behavior and Attitude Change." Frontiers. Frontiers, January 1, 1AD. https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02180/full#:~:text=Social%20norms%20are%20typically%20defined,behaviors%20(Ajzen%2C%201991).

In Yemen women and men adhere to strict gender roles. Discriminatory attitudes towards women strip them of their autonomy and mobility. Women are molded to conduct themselves in a passive and obedient manner. The Population Reference Bureau (PRB) along with the "Safe Age of Marriage" interviewed family members who engaged in the practice of child marriage. One father stated, "There are no girls who refuse. A woman is a woman. Her only choice is the husband or the grave."[131]

Confined to the domestic sphere, women are responsible for maintaining the house, taking care of the children and elderly, cleaning, etc. The age at which a young girl marries varies and is dependent on many factors; however, in rural areas, it is believed that "the child will likely develop opinions and a sense of identity outside the home if not married away early, so early marriage makes females passive and subservient."[132] Marrying her off at a young age ensures that the daughter does not gain autonomy and independence. Further, it is easier to control a young child believing that "...the marriage of a young girl prolongs her marital life and increases the number of her potential offspring…"[133]

The practice of early marriage is more prevalent in rural regions where individuals favor long-established attitudes. In these areas, women tend to 90 percent of the livestock, providing

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[131] "PRB Discuss Online: Child Marriage in Yemen." PRB. Accessed January 2, 2022. https://www.prb.org/resources/prb-discuss-online-child-marriage-in-yemen/.

[132] Voinarevich, Olga. "A Fairy Tale Interrupted: The Long-Term Impacts of Child Marriage in Yemen and the Necessart Adjustments to Both Local and International Laws to Stop the Practice and to Protect Voiceless Child Brides," 2015, 211.

[133] Voinarevich, Olga. "A Fairy Tale Interrupted: The Long-Term Impacts of Child Marriage in Yemen and the Necessart Adjustments to Both Local and International Laws to Stop the Practice and to Protect Voiceless Child Brides," 2015, 213.

60 percent of the crop labor. Still, they earn 30 percent less than their male counterparts.[134] Further, 63 percent of children who drop out of school enrollment are young girls. In effect, women are viewed as 'economic burdens' categorizing them as profitable assets. In rural districts, the bride-price plays an integral role in the family's decision to marry their young daughter. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the 'bride price' is increased by factors such as virginity, and youth as she has longer child rearing years. Conventional perspectives and dowry traditions make a young girl vulnerable to early marriage, especially if her family is going through a period of financial distress "because the child's family could potentially make money on the marriage as well as relieve themselves of supporting the child."[135]

In her memoir, *I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced*, survivor of early and forced marriage, Nujood Ali, recounts her experience. Nujood Ali was born in Khardji, a rural village in Yemen. Shoya, Nujood's mother, was 16 years old when she married her father, Ali Mohammad ad-Ahdel "without a word of protest."[136]At the age of 9, Nujood was taken out of school and betrothed for a dowry equivalent to 750 dollars. She accepted her father's decision, the same way her mother, Shoya, obediently accepted her union. Nujood's husband, Faez Ali Thamer, was a man three times her senior. When asked why he had married his daughter off, he stated "I was really in need of money and thought it was a solution for the family."

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134 Voinarevich, Olga. "A Fairy Tale Interrupted: The Long-Term Impacts of Child Marriage in Yemen and the Necessart Adjustments to Both Local and International Laws to Stop the Practice and to Protect Voiceless Child Brides," 2015.

135 Voinarevich, Olga. "A Fairy Tale Interrupted: The Long-Term Impacts of Child Marriage in Yemen and the Necessart Adjustments to Both Local and International Laws to Stop the Practice and to Protect Voiceless Child Brides," 2015, 212

136 Ali , Nujood. *I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced*. Paw Prints, 2011, 23.

Nujood Ali's story reinforces the patriarchal structure of Yemen where "...the real law is laid down by fathers and old brothers"[137] and demonstrates how during times of financial distress, this practice can turn young women into a 'profitable asset'. As such, Nujood Ali's memoir demonstrates the interrelated relationship between male-dominated cultural values and economics within the custom of child marriage.

Honor is a foundational element within the tribe. When Nujood Ali obtained a divorce, many of her relatives shamed her for going against her father's wishes and disgracing the family altogether. Her uncle said "You've sullied the reputation of our family! You've stained our honor!"[138] For a woman, her honor is tied directly to her purity. A woman's virginity, or lack of it, impacts her social standing within society. Voinarvich Olga discusses the interlinked relationship between tribal attitudes, virginity, and early marriage in Yemen in her article *A Fairy Tale Interrupted.* Olga states, "...the notion of chastity and virginity is of most importance…a tribal Yemeni proverb states: 'to guarantee a happy marriage, marry a nine-year-old girl.' A girl's virginity reflects the family's honor; thus, parents quickly arrange marriages not only to 'protect' their child from sexual immortality, but also to protect themselves from gossip and slander."[139] As such, parents marry their young daughter off to "protect" her purity and to avoid ill repute. In sum, the Yemeni Culture considers virginity, family honor, and gender roles reason enough to marry a young girl off.[140]

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[137] Ali , Nujood. *I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced*. Paw Prints, 2011, 10.

[138] Ali , Nujood. *I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced*. Paw Prints, 2011, 117.

[139] Voinarevich, Olga. "A Fairy Tale Interrupted: The Long-Term Impacts of Child Marriage in Yemen and the Necessart Adjustments to Both Local and International Laws to Stop the Practice and to Protect Voiceless Child Brides," 2015, 221

[140] Jamobo, Tamunoimama. "A Discourse on the Developmental Effects of Child Marriage." African Journal of Social Sciences 2, no. 3 (2012): 135-44.

*Legislation*

By statue, women and girls have limited protection and rights. Yemen's discriminatory legal system has placed women as second-class citizens, making them vulnerable to violence and economic and social inequality.[141] As mentioned before, the primary religion in Yemen is Islam. For that reason, the legal system consists of the Yemen codified law and the Shari'a or Islamic Law.[142] This thesis will focus on discriminatory laws regarding the practice of early marriage.

Yemen's Personal Status Law deems women as lesser than men and limits their freedoms(s) in regard to marriage, divorce, custody, and mobility.[143] This legislation was established in a united Yemen and codified family law. Passed in 1992, this convention repealed a former one, which set the age of majority at 15. Thus, there is no minimum age for marriage.[144] The establishment of Personal Status Law eliminated a majority of legal protections available to young girls. The only form of protection for young girls in the Personal Status Law is located in Article 15, which prohibits sexual intercourse with a girl until she reaches puberty, "...even if she is older than 15 years." Violation of this may result in a fine or being sent to jail for one to three years.[145] However, this form of security is flawed as it does not stop women from being assaulted prior to their first menstrual cycle.

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[141] Voinarevich, Olga. "A Fairy Tale Interrupted: The Long-Term Impacts of Child Marriage in Yemen and the Necessart Adjustments to Both Local and International Laws to Stop the Practice and to Protect Voiceless Child Brides," 2015, 214

[142] Voinarevich, Olga. "A Fairy Tale Interrupted: The Long-Term Impacts of Child Marriage in Yemen and the Necessart Adjustments to Both Local and International Laws to Stop the Practice and to Protect Voiceless Child Brides," 2015, 215

[143] "Yemen – the Personal Status Act No. 20 of 1992." Equality Now. Accessed January 2, 2022. https://www.equalitynow.org/discriminatory_law/yemen_the_personal_status_act_no_20_of_1992/.

[144] "Yemen – the Personal Status Act No. 20 of 1992." Equality Now. Accessed January 2, 2022. https://www.equalitynow.org/discriminatory_law/yemen_the_personal_status_act_no_20_of_1992/.

[145] Würth, Anna. "Stalled Reform: Family Law in Post-Unification Yemen." *Islamic Law and Society* 10, no. 1 (2003): 12–33. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3399218.

Under this law, a Yemeni woman must obtain permission from a male guardian to marry and the bride does not need to be present to seal a marriage contract. "Article 23 of the Personal Status Act also requires express consent to marriage only if the woman has been previously married. For previously unmarried women, (considered 'virgin'), silence is sufficient to indicate consent to marriage. This makes women and girls vulnerable to being forced into marriage."[146] A man can marry up to four wives "...if he is able to treat them all equitably, has sufficient financial means, and the woman he is about to marry is aware that he is already married."[147]

In 1999, additional changes were made to the law. For example, "[a] provision allowing forcibly married girls to divorce while maintaining their right to maintenance was repealed."[148]

**Chapter Three**

*'Has child marriage increased during the Yemen Civil War?'*

In an effort to answer this research question, global data, national data, and primary accounts will be analyzed. Global data includes evidence and studies from various IGOs and NGOs such as briefings from UNICEF. National data collection on child marriage in Yemen includes state censuses and household surveys. Incorporated in this paper is data from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and the World Bank. Research is limited because the quantity and quality of national data tend to decline during times of conflict since displaced populations and unregistered marriages are not taken into account by national data. Further, it is

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[146] "Yemen – the Personal Status Act No. 20 of 1992." Equality Now. Accessed January 2, 2022. https://www.equalitynow.org/discriminatory_law/yemen_the_personal_status_act_no_20_of_1992/.

[147] "Yemen – the Personal Status Act No. 20 of 1992." Equality Now. Accessed January 2, 2022. https://www.equalitynow.org/discriminatory_law/yemen_the_personal_status_act_no_20_of_1992/.

[148] Voinarevich, Olga. "A Fairy Tale Interrupted: The Long-Term Impacts of Child Marriage in Yemen and the Necessart Adjustments to Both Local and International Laws to Stop the Practice and to Protect Voiceless Child Brides," 2015, 212.

not always clear whether national statistics and trends take refugee populations into account. In an attempt to find gender data on the prevalence of child marriage in Yemen, little to no national statistics was available since 2015. Owing to the gender-blind nature of data, there are significant gaps in research collected on child marriage in the context of the ongoing conflict. To address this knowledge gap, the use of primary accounts taken from various NGOs and IGOs will be utilized. Primary accounts will consist of key informant interviews and personal accounts performed by NGOs and IGOs.

Before the beginning of the conflict, child marriage in Yemen was driven by economic and cultural factors, but the Civil War demonstrated alarming trends in the increase of child marriage. According to the 2013 Yemen Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 31.9 percent of women were married before the age of 18, and 9.4 percent were married before the age of 15.[149] In 2016, the DHS survey showed that 72 percent of Yemeni women had been forced into an early marriage. Of this figure, 44 percent had been married before their 15th birthday.[150] In 2016, a UNICEF assessment in 30 communities within six governorates of Yemen demonstrated a large increase in the practice of child marriage.[151] In 2017, an evidence review by UNICEF estimated that more than two-thirds of young girls were brides, compared to 50 percent before the conflict.[152] In figure 1, evidence recorded by the DHS compared the percentage of women

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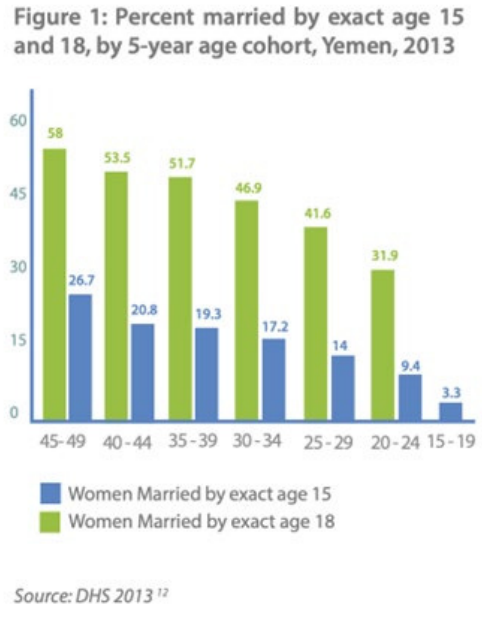
[149] "Yemen - Country Profile." UNICEF GLOBAL PROGRAMME TO END CHILD MARRIAGE. UNFPA - UNICEF, 2020. https://www.unicef.org/media/88851/file/Child-marriage-Yemen-profile-2019.pdf.

[150] "Yemen - Country Profile ." UNICEF GLOBAL PROGRAMME TO END CHILD MARRIAGE . UNFPA - UNICEF , 2020. https://www.unicef.org/media/88851/file/Child-marriage-Yemen-profile-2019.pdf.

[151] UNICEF Yemen, and UNICEF Yemen. "Falling through the Cracks: The Children of Yemen." UNICEF Yemen, March 1, 2017. https://www.unicef.org/yemen/reports/falling-through-cracks-children-yemen.

[152] 'Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa – Yemen Country Brief', United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Middle East and North Africa Regional Office in collaboration with the International Center for Research on Women (IRCW), 2017.

and girls married by age 15 or 18 in accordance to their age cohort. The graph demonstrates that before 2013, there was a secular trend of decline in the practice of child marriage. Combined, the data demonstrates that before the conflict began in 2013, child marriage was declining; however, this soon changed once the conflict began and escalated in 2015.



[153]

Graphs on the Saudi-led or KSA-led aerial campaign and displacement rates will be compared to explain that although war does not directly cause child marriage, conflicts increase poverty and instability which increase the rates of child marriage.

The conflict's entrenched, militarized nature has left a traumatizing impact on the Yemeni populations, such as displacement in the region. Thousands of Yemeni civilians have been forced to flee the devastation of the conflict due to the severity of Saudi-led missile and airstrikes. This

[153] "Yemen Country Brief - UNICEF." United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). ICRW International Center for Research on Women , 2017. https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/1821/file/%20MENA-CMReport-YemenBrief.pdf.pdf.

thesis will attempt to test the correlation between an increase in aerial bombardments and a change in displacement rates.

In 2015, the Saudi-led coalition began an aerial campaign over Yemen in which several Red Sea ports were besieged. One rebel-occupied port, Hudaydah, was hit and destroyed by several airstrikes. Hudaydah, one of the largest ports, is responsible for all aid shipments arriving for Yemeni civilians who reside in the rebel occupied area.[154] The launches cut off supply lines, and "had been increasingly built around preventing desperately needed aid and essential goods from reaching civilians, risking millions of lives…the Saudi and other coalition leaders are responsible for blocking food, field, and medicine, causing hunger, sickness, and death."[155]

Below are three graphs, each labeled Graph 1, 2, or 3. Graph 1 illustrates the number of airstrikes that took place since the campaign's inception. In 2014, prior to the conflict's escalation, the number of individuals displaced was the lowest. The highest number of airstrikes, 920, occurred in September 2015. Graph 2 records the displacement rates in Yemen. In 2015, when the Saudi-led coalition began its campaign, the number of displaced persons increased from the previous year. In the months of July and October, the number of people displaced mimicked the trend of increased airstrikes. Towards the end of 2016, the aerial bombardments increased matching the pattern of displaced people. The aerial bombardments continued, resulting in an increased number of displaced persons. Graph 3 combines both the militarization of the conflict, documenting key events and rates of displacement beginning in 2004 and ending

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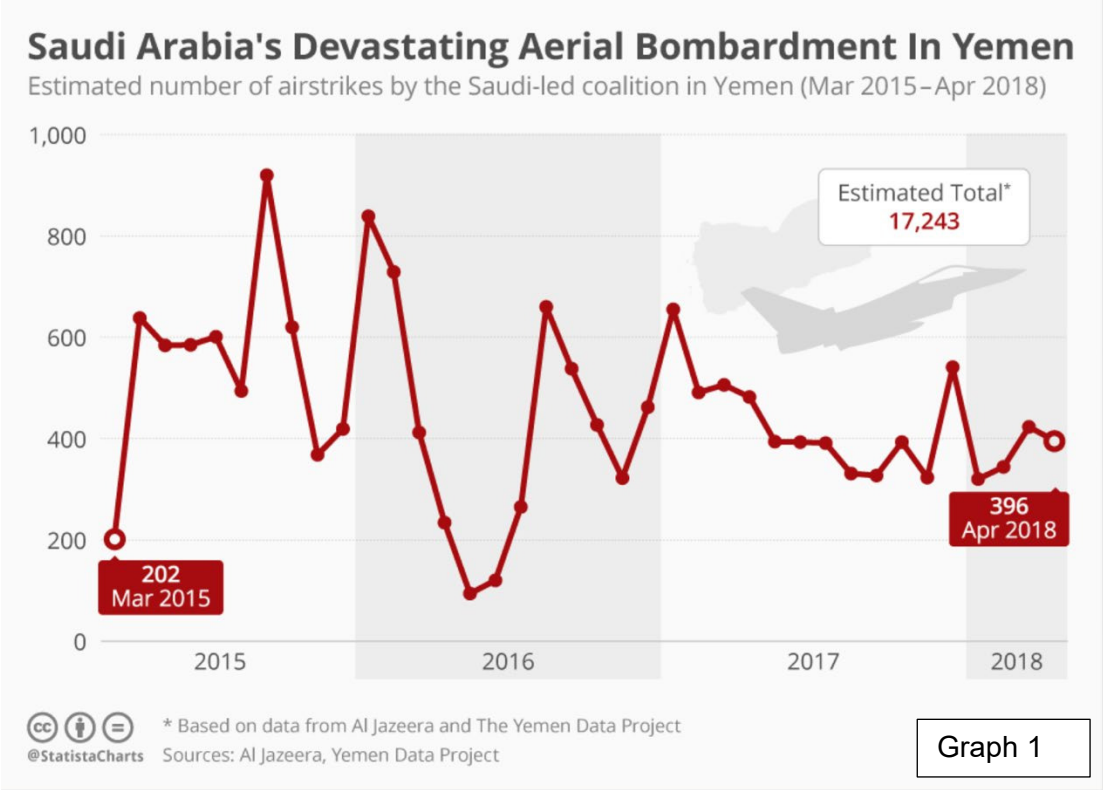
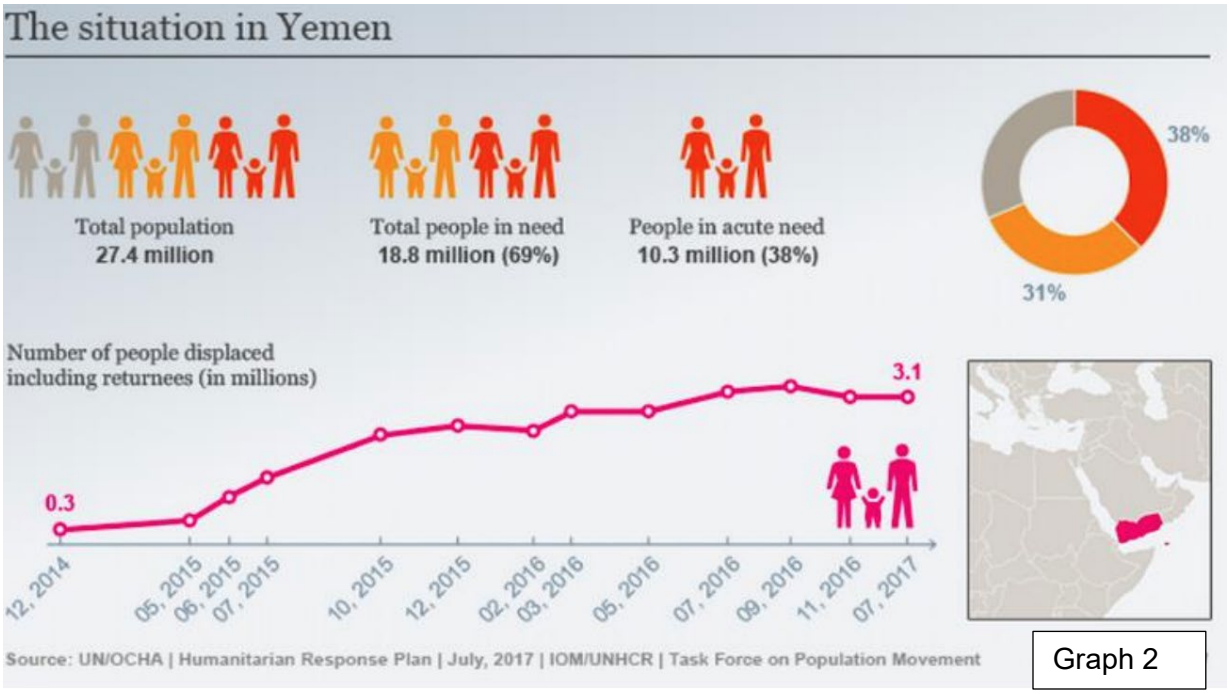
[154] Ross, James. "Yemen: Coalition Blockade Imperils Civilians." Human Rights Watch, October 28, 2020. https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/07/yemen-coalition-blockade-imperils-civilians.

[155] Ross, James. "Yemen: Coalition Blockade Imperils Civilians." Human Rights Watch, October 28, 2020. https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/07/yemen-coalition-blockade-imperils-civilians.

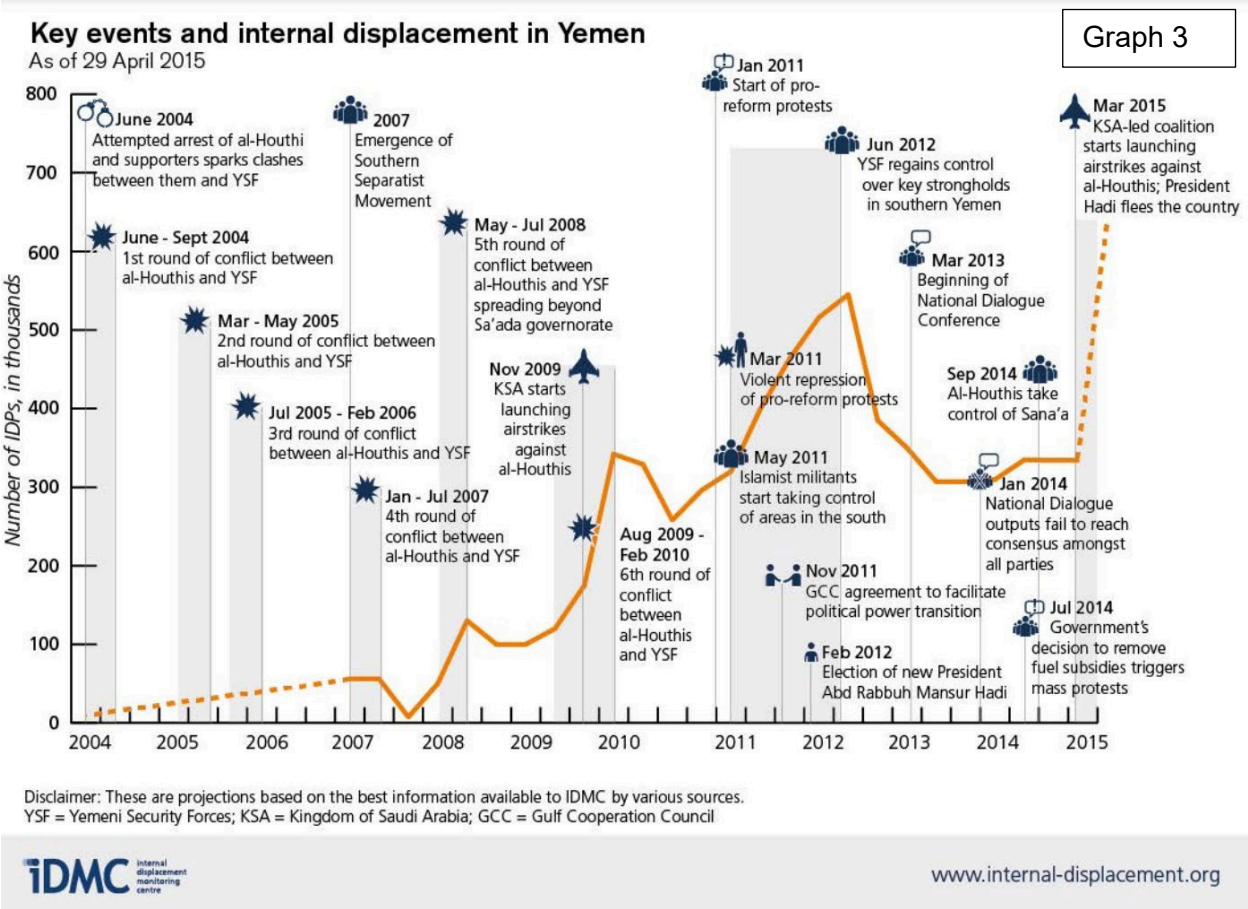
in 2015. In March of 2015, the number of displaced individuals increased, and the KSA-led coalition began launching airstrikes against the Houthi rebels. It can be concluded that the escalation of militarization contributed to the displacement of the Yemeni people and, as a result, further insecurity and instability.




Graph 1




Graph 2


Graph 3
Key events and internal displacement in Yemen
As of 29 April 2015
Number of IDPs, in thousands
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
June 2004
Attempted arrest of al-Houthi and supporters sparks clashes between them and YSF
June - Sept 2004
1st round of conflict between al-Houthis and YSF
Mar - May 2005
2nd round of conflict between al-Houthis and YSF
Jul 2005 - Feb 2006
3rd round of conflict between al-Houthis and YSF
Jan - Jul 2007
4th round of conflict between al-Houthis and YSF
2007
Emergence of Southern Separatist Movement
May - Jul 2008
5th round of conflict between al-Houthis and YSF spreading beyond Sa'ada governorate
Nov 2009
KSA starts launching airstrikes against al-Houthis
Aug 2009 - Feb 2010
6th round of conflict between al-Houthis and YSF
Jan 2011
Start of pro-reform protests
Mar 2011
Violent repression of pro-reform protests
May 2011
Islamist militants start taking control of areas in the south
Nov 2011
GCC agreement to facilitate political power transition
Feb 2012
Election of new President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi
Jun 2012
YSF regains control over key strongholds in southern Yemen
Mar 2013
Beginning of National Dialogue Conference
Sep 2014
Al-Houthis take control of Sana'a
Jan 2014
National Dialogue outputs fail to reach consensus amongst all parties
Jul 2014
Government's decision to remove fuel subsidies triggers mass protests
Mar 2015
KSA-led coalition starts launching airstrikes against al-Houthis; President Hadi flees the country
Disclaimer: These are projections based on the best information available to IDMC by various sources.
YSF = Yemeni Security Forces; KSA = Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; GCC = Gulf Cooperation Council
IDMC
internal displacement monitoring centre
www.internal-displacement.org

While the facilitators of child marriage are multi-dimensional and vary across borders, in Yemen, a key driver in the increase of this practice is economic deprivation.[156] Poverty rose from 42 percent in 2009 to 54.5 percent in 2012.[157] As stated by the UN, "in [Yemen] the poverty exacerbated by violence has 'created a fertile environment' for an increase in child

[156] "Child Marriage in Humanitarian Settings in the Arab States ..." Women's Refugee Commission, December 2020. https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Child-marriage-Arab-states-synthesis-report-FINAL.pdf.

[157] "Yemen - Country Profile ." UNICEF GLOBAL PROGRAMME TO END CHILD MARRIAGE . UNFPA - UNICEF , 2020. https://www.unicef.org/media/88851/file/Child-marriage-Yemen-profile-2019.pdf.

marriage."[158] In October of 2020, a UNICEF report concluded that "since the crisis, families have become very poor, and they see girls as an economic burden, so they give them in marriage."[159] One informer from the IRC stated, "Before the start of 2015, early marriage was not high, but after the conflict started, people were forced to move out from their areas - with families in bad economic situations, child marriage rose dramatically."[160] Economic hardships caused by border closures, inflation, and loss of jobs reinforce the use of bride prices. In these cases, "poor families adopt negative coping mechanisms, such as marrying their daughters to obtain bride wealth (*mahr).*"[161] The practice of bride prices is seen as offering physical and financial security to the young girl, while allowing the family to reduce their expenses by having fewer children to take care of. As such, male guardians find early unions useful during times of heightened poverty, "allegedly to protect [the young bride] from hunger."[162]

When comparing the annual percentage growth rate of Yemen's GDP to the increase in the practice of child marriage, we can see a clear correlation. "The GDP is the sum of gross value

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[158] "Yemen Country Brief - UNICEF." United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). ICRW International Center for Research on Women , 2017. https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/1821/file/%20MENA-CMReport-YemenBrief.pdf.pdf.

[159] "Child Marriage in Humanitarian Settings in the Arab States ..." Women's Refugee Commission, December 2020. https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Child-marriage-Arab-states-synthesis-report-FINAL.pdf.

[160] "Yemen Country Brief - UNICEF." United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). ICRW International Center for Research on Women , 2017. https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/1821/file/%20MENA-CMReport-YemenBrief.pdf.pdf.

[161] "Yemen Country Brief - UNICEF." United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). ICRW International Center for Research on Women , 2017. https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/1821/file/%20MENA-CMReport-YemenBrief.pdf.pdf.

[162] Birchall, Jenny. "Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Fragile and Conflict ..." K4D: Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development, April 20, 2020. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/805_child_early_and_forced_marriage_in_fcas.pdf?embed=1.

added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products….A healthy domestic product (GDP) growth rate sustains the economy in the expansion phase of the business cycle…Most economists agree the ideal GDP growth rate is between 2 percent and 3 percent."[163] In Figure 1, the data begins in 1991 and ends in 2018. It should be noted that the World Bank did not record Yemen's GDP following the year 2018. During the '90s and early 2000s when there was a steady decline in early marriage, Yemen's GDP was healthy and ranged from 6.293 in 1991 to 7.702 in 2010. Figures 2 and 3 show Yemen's GDP from 1991 to 2010. During this period, the lowest GDP was 3.17 in 2006. Taken from the World Bank, data from Figure 4 demonstrates a drastic decline in the country's GDP from 2010 to 2011 and from 2014 to 2015. In 2010 the GDP was 7.702 and in 2011 the GDP was -12.715. In 2014 the GDP was -0.189 and in 2015 the GDP was -27.995. These figures correlate to the conflict's beginnings and escalation. To date, Yemen's GDP in 2015 was the lowest.

[163] Amadeo, Kimberly. "What Is the Ideal GDP Growth Rate?" The Balance. The Balance, January 28, 2022. https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-the-ideal-gdp-growth-rate-3306017.

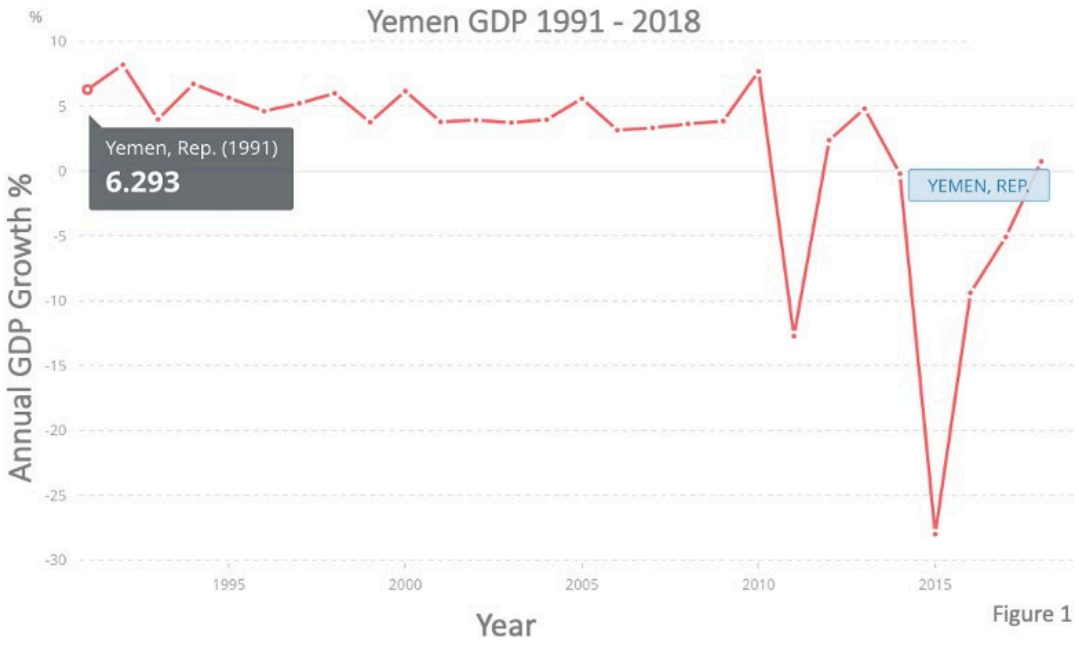


Figure 1

Figure 2

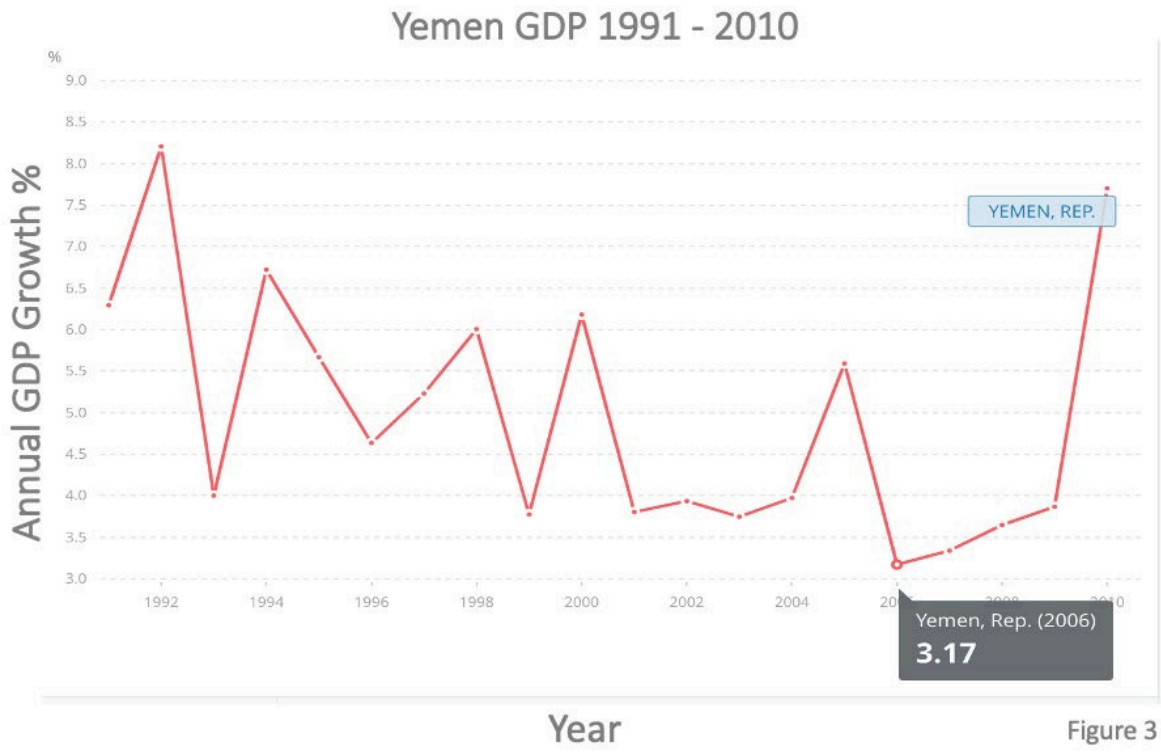


Figure 3

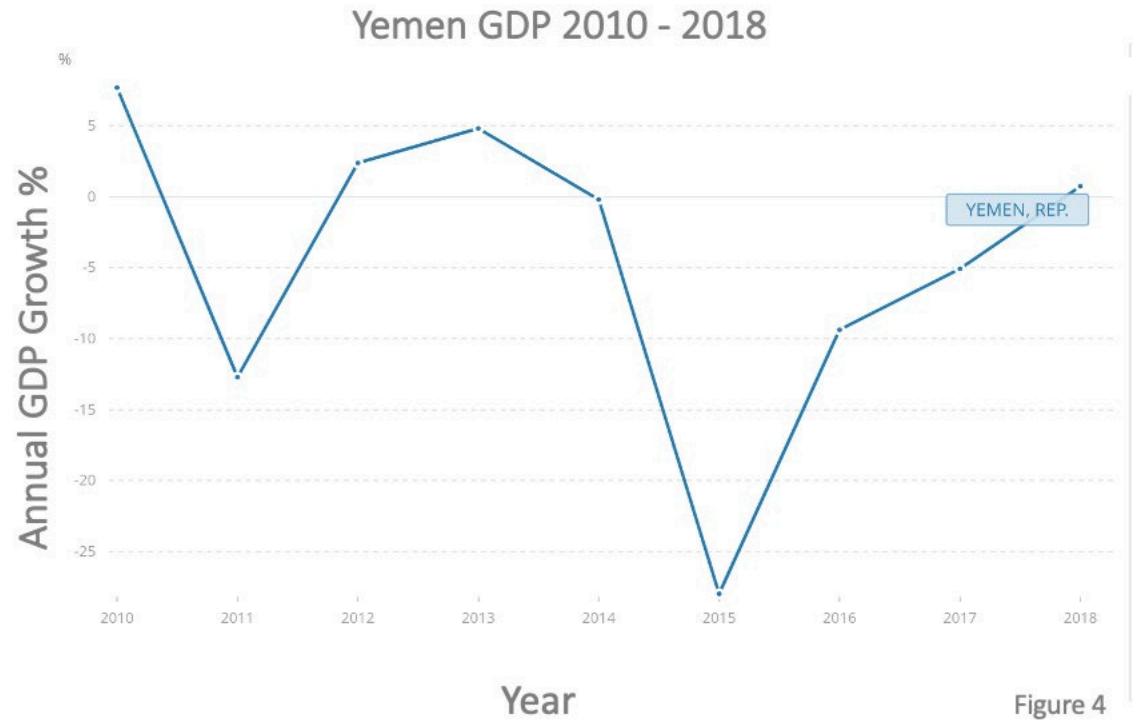


Figure 4

Political instability, insecurity, threats of sexual violence, and destruction of infrastructure threaten the security of the Yemeni state and the vulnerability of young girls. The conflict's increased militarization has worsened economic and security problems, in turn, increasing women's vulnerabilities to early marriage. Recorded GBV incidents show an upward trend since March 2015, with "70% more incidents reported…women are more acutely affected by declines in living conditions and service availability,"[164] following the rate of the conflict's escalation.

Country comparisons were utilized in this thesis to demonstrate differences and nuances not found in country data. In Yemen, young brides marry men who are between five and fifteen years their senior. In Uganda, early unions take place between children of similar ages. While child marriage exists in both states, in Yemen, the families view "[marriage] with an older man as a protection and security mechanism for their daughters…in Uganda…[marriages] were in some cases more likely to be initiated by adolescents themselves, partly as a coping response to experiences of trauma, loss, and a desire for intimacy."[165] This evidence review conducted by independent researcher Jenny Birchall illustrates that apart from economic hardships, cultural dynamics and social norms mentioned in the previous chapter contribute to the rising rates of early unions in Yemen. Factors such as familial honor, virginity, and female sexuality all alter

[164] "Yemen Country Brief - UNICEF." United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). ICRW International Center for Research on Women , 2017. https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/1821/file/%20MENA-CMReport-YemenBrief.pdf.pdf.

[165] Birchall, Jenny. "Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Fragile and Conflict ..." K4D: Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development, April 20, 2020. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/805_child_early_and_forced_marriage_in_fcas.pdf?embed=1.

the male guardians' decision to "marry off girls at a young and younger age."[166] Upon analyzing the dynamics of child marriage in Yemen, it was further discovered by Birchall that sexual violence played a central role in the family's decision to marry their young daughter. These unions are referred to as *'Sutra'* and, are employed as a way "...to protect youth from premarital sex…"[167] Former program coordinator for Yemen's 'Safe Age of Marriage Project', Dalia Al-Eryani, discusses these unions in greater detail. She states, "...the majority of fathers do want to protect their daughters but find the religious and cultural arguments for child marriage to be too compelling."[168]

*Tourist Marriage*

*Child trafficking is defined as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article."[169] Art. 3(c), UN TIP Protocol*

It is important to reiterate that in Yemen, marriage is an expensive endeavor and Yemeni men are marrying at a much later age. This is significant to understand why there are cultural norms regarding a family's decision to marry their young daughter to a much older man or a

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[166] Birchall, Jenny. "Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Fragile and Conflict ..." K4D: Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development, April 20, 2020. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/805_child_early_and_forced_marriage_in_fcas.pdf?embed=1.

[167] Birchall, Jenny. "Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Fragile and Conflict ..." K4D: Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development, April 20, 2020. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/805_child_early_and_forced_marriage_in_fcas.pdf?embed=1.

[168] Birchall, Jenny. "Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Fragile and Conflict ..." K4D: Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development, April 20, 2020. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/805_child_early_and_forced_marriage_in_fcas.pdf?embed=1.

[169] "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in ..." Accessed April 7, 2022. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons.

foreigner. Studies from several neighboring Arab states highlight concerns about child marriage and human trafficking.[170] Known as 'Tourist Marriages', these unions involve a young Yemeni girl and an older man typically from a Gulf country. These unions are a specific form of child marriage and are "intended by the groom to be of a limited duration -- a fact not clearly communicated to the parents, brides, or Yemeni officials."[171] As such, these marital arrangements are deceptive due to the bride's lack of knowledge surrounding the 'temporary nature' of the marriage "for the sole purpose of sexual exploitation."[172] In an interview in 2014, an unnamed Yemeni Academic stated, "Many parents of these girl-brides are angry because they were tricked into thinking it was a real marriage. These young girls have had their lives ruined because the adults around them were naïve."[173]

The 2017 UNICEF country assessment found that "the conflict is thought to have increased avenues for these types of arrangements as families desperately seek opportunities for their daughters to escape to a more stable country."[174] Sada Zawbah, national coordinator for human rights projects in the UN development agency stated that while Tourist Marriages existed in Yemen prior to the conflict, "the desperation and poverty of Yemeni families had led to an

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[170] Birchall, Jenny. "Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Fragile and Conflict ..." K4D: Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development, April 20, 2020. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/805_child_early_and_forced_marriage_in_fcas.pdf?embed=1.

[171] Birchall, Jenny. "Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Fragile and Conflict ..." K4D: Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development, April 20, 2020. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/805_child_early_and_forced_marriage_in_fcas.pdf?embed=1.

[172] "Tourist Marriage - International Organization for Migration." International Organization for Migration (IOM). Yemen Modern Printing Press, 2014. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/tourist_marriage_yemen.pdf.

[173] "Tourist Marriage - International Organization for Migration." International Organization for Migration (IOM). Yemen Modern Printing Press, 2014. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/tourist_marriage_yemen.pdf.

[174] "Yemen Country Brief - UNICEF." United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). ICRW International Center for Research on Women , 2017. https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/1821/file/%20MENA-CMReport-YemenBrief.pdf.pdf.

increase in this practice."[175] Tourist Marriages have key economic dimensions. A Yemeni individual from the Ibb Governate stated, "We are all poor and on the edge of financial doom. Of course our young men cannot afford to pay a dowry to marry. This situation contributes to many social diseases in Ibb."[176] showing the unfortunate circumstance of many Yemeni men who are unable to afford the cost of dowries and wedding ceremonies. This reality is in sharp contrast with men from the Gulf region "who consider local marriage costs cheap (estimates ranging from USD 3,000 to USD 5,000), given the huge income disparity between Yemen and its neighbors (the average combined GDP per capita in the Gulf is over 33 times larger than Yemen)."[177] Taken from a research study on this phenomenon, a man from Jibla, Ibb in 2014 remarked on the practice of Tourist Marriages stating, "They play with young girls with their money, and those who are greedy and weak will sell their daughters."[178]

Government statistics on Arab tourists traveling to Yemen illustrate a dramatic increase in the number of visitors. Due to the Saudi involvement in the conflict, it is no coincidence that the demographic of Gulf men engaged in these unions were primarily from Saudi Arabia.

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[175] Birchall, Jenny. "Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Fragile and Conflict ..." K4D: Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development, April 20, 2020. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/805_child_early_and_forced_marriage_in_fcas.pdf?embed=1.

[176] Birchall, Jenny. "Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Fragile and Conflict ..." K4D: Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development, April 20, 2020. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/805_child_early_and_forced_marriage_in_fcas.pdf?embed=1.

[177] Birchall, Jenny. "Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Fragile and Conflict ..." K4D: Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development, April 20, 2020. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/805_child_early_and_forced_marriage_in_fcas.pdf?embed=1.

[178] Birchall, Jenny. "Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Fragile and Conflict ..." K4D: Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development, April 20, 2020. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/805_child_early_and_forced_marriage_in_fcas.pdf?embed=1.

Statistics indicate an increase in their involvement from 23.6 percent in 1995 to 81.3 percent in 2013.[179]

The impact of Tourist Marriages is devastating to the young brides who fall prey to the practice with "regards to their reproductive health, psychological well-being, educational aspirations and emotional development."[180]

**Chapter Four**

*What factors contribute to the increase of child marriage?*

I started by asking '*What factors contribute to the increase of this practice?*' While evidence provided in this thesis demonstrates a correlation between the current armed conflict in Yemen and an increase in child marriage, in fragile and conflict-affected states, other additional factors impact the likelihood for early unions. Many of these wider dynamics are excluded from the above graphs. The following section will analyze the various *factors that contribute to the increase of this practice.*

*Residential Area and Education*

The global prevalence of child marriage is on a downward trajectory; however, in the developing world, primarily in rural and poor districts, these unions persist. The organization "Marrying Too Young," predicts that women in rural areas enter early unions at twice the rate as their urban counterparts with estimates projecting 44 percent compared to 22 percent.

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[179] "Tourist Marriage - International Organization for Migration." International Organization for Migration (IOM). Yemen Modern Printing Press, 2014. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/tourist_marriage_yemen.pdf.

[180] "Tourist Marriage - International Organization for Migration." International Organization for Migration (IOM). Yemen Modern Printing Press, 2014. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/tourist_marriage_yemen.pdf.

In Yemen, prior to the conflict, the practice of child marriage occurred in both rural and urban regions. However, child marriage was more frequent in rural sectors with the median age of marriage being 17 as opposed to 19 in urban areas.[181] Projections taken from Hadhramawt and Hudaida, 2 rural districts in Yemen, found that girls as young as eight had been wed. This fact may be the result of "local tradition; parents may believe it safeguards their daughters' future; poverty or conflict may propel it."[182] But, as stated by the executive director of UNFPA, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, "more often than not, child marriage is the outcome of fewer choices. Girls who miss out or drop out of school are especially vulnerable to it--while the more exposure a girl has to formal education and the better-off her family is, the more likely marriage is to be postponed. And that is the heart of the matter – when girls have a choice, they marry later. Parents, communities and countries want the very best for their girls. The best for girls is the product of education, good health, including sexual and reproductive health, and broad choices that are to be freely made, not only in regard to marriage, but in all aspects of her life."[183]

In essence, while a woman's residential status *does* impact her likelihood of becoming a child bride, to end here would be an incomplete analysis. Several compounding factors outside of residential status such as level of completed education and income contribute to the chances of a girl becoming a victim of this practice. Although an individual's residence and level of education

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[181] Loaiza, Edilberto. "Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage." UNFPA. United Nations Population Fund, 2012. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MarryingTooYoung.pdf.

[182] Loaiza, Edilberto. "Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage." UNFPA. United Nations Population Fund, 2012. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MarryingTooYoung.pdf.

[183] Loaiza, Edilberto. "Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage." UNFPA. United Nations Population Fund, 2012. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MarryingTooYoung.pdf.

are independent variables, they both are important overlapping factors. As such, this thesis will combine residential status and education into one section of findings.

Access to education is an important deterrent to child marriage. Young girls who miss or drop out of school "are especially vulnerable to [child marriage"[184] In Yemen, child marriage rates are highest in districts where a large percentage of women are "out of school or whose education has been stalled."[185] According to the Human Rights Watch, "girls without a formal education have fewer opportunities to work and financially provide for themselves and their families."[186] When school is not seen as a potential avenue to security and stability, "girls are instead forced to marry due to prevailing gender inequalities,"[187] In other words, lack of education limits young girls' opportunities and perpetuates a "downward cycle of deprivation."[188]

Data from the DHS in 2013 reported that in Yemen, there was a large gap between educational attainment and gender that contributed to the frequency of these unions. Yemen has relatively low literacy rates with only 53 percent of women ages 15-49 being able to read and write.[189] Notably, women in urban areas have higher literacy rates compared to women in rural

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[184] Loaiza, Edilberto. "Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage ." UNFPA. United Nations Population Fund, 2012. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MarryingTooYoung.pdf.

[185] Loaiza, Edilberto. "Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage ." UNFPA. United Nations Population Fund, 2012. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MarryingTooYoung.pdf.

[186] 'How Come You Allow Little Girls to Get Married?"." Human Rights Watch, April 29, 2015. https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/12/07/how-come-you-allow-little-girls-get-married/child-marriage-yemen.

[187] "'How Come You Allow Little Girls to Get Married?"." Human Rights Watch, April 29, 2015. https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/12/07/how-come-you-allow-little-girls-get-married/child-marriage-yemen.

[188] "How Come You Allow Little Girls to Get Married?"." Human Rights Watch, April 29, 2015. https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/12/07/how-come-you-allow-little-girls-get-married/child-marriage-yemen.

[189] Loaiza, Edilberto. "Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage ." UNFPA. United Nations Population Fund, 2012. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MarryingTooYoung.pdf.

areas (76 percent compared to 41 percent).[190] In an interview with the Human Rights Watch, a school principal from Hudaida, a rural district, describes the dynamics of early marriage in rural regions: "Most girls are taken out of school after fourth or fifth grade [around nine or ten years], just when they become adolescents and begin puberty. The girls return to the home, they cook, fetch water and wood, or are married off if there is an opportunity."[191]

While economics does play an important role in child marriage, "Marrying Too Young" found that poverty coupled with higher levels of education decreased the chances of a family marrying their young daughter. The figure below demonstrates the positive association between educational attainment and the median age of first marriage in Yemen. Taken from the DHS in 2013, the women surveyed were between the ages of 25 and 49. What was discovered was that among women who completed secondary school, the median age of marriage was three times higher than those who completed no education (21 compared to 17.4). Taken together, the findings suggest that higher education is protective in delaying the age of marriage for young women, even in the context of financial hardships. It is fair to conclude that there is a significant correlation between lower rates of early unions and factors associated with higher levels of development (urban areas) and education.

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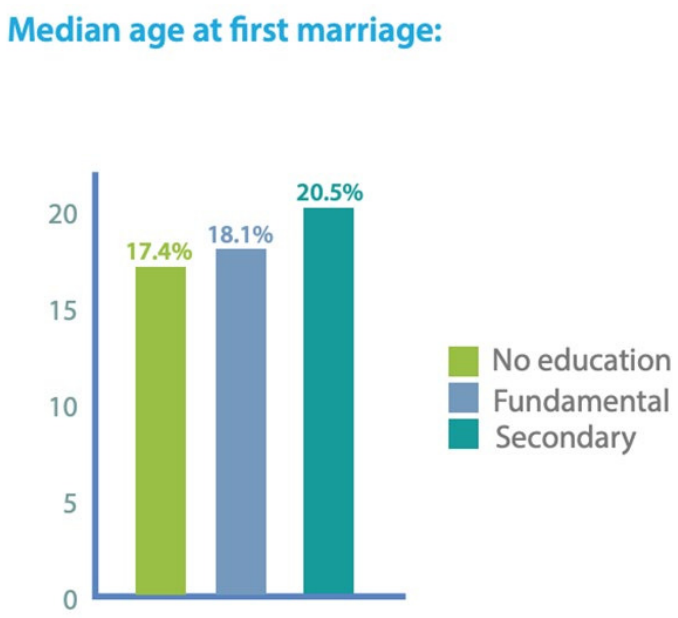
[190] Loaiza, Edilberto. "Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage ." UNFPA. United Nations Population Fund, 2012. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MarryingTooYoung.pdf.

[191] 'How Come You Allow Little Girls to Get Married?"." Human Rights Watch, April 29, 2015. https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/12/07/how-come-you-allow-little-girls-get-married/child-marriage-yemen.




*Source: DHS 2013* [13]

It should be noted that although there is a correlation between education and age of marriage, "the causality of this association is not clear, low education may be both a cause and/or consequence of child marriage."[192]

*Personal Status*

*Refugee:* Determined in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, "a refugee is someone who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."[193]

*Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): "*An internally displaced persons are individuals or groups who have fled their homes, particularly in armed conflicts, out of necessity in search of safety or

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[192] Loaiza, Edilberto. "Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage ." UNFPA. United Nations Population Fund, 2012. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MarryingTooYoung.pdf.

[193] "OHCHR | About Internally Displaced Persons." United Nations Human Rights . Accessed March 24, 2022. https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-internally-displaced-persons/about-internally-displaced-persons.

to avoid persecution. These individuals have not crossed an internationally recognized border and remain in their country."[194]

*"On returning from work one evening, my house was unusually quiet. Only my sister was home, and she was packing up a few things.…we were leaving the home I had grown up in. Armed fighters on every street, especially those visible from our second-story windows on the roof of the house next door. It was March 2015, and the war was clearly coming our way. I packed a few things, some clothes, photographs, and headed through the darkness of a power outage to an empty flat my father had rented a few blocks away in my city of Taiz, the start of my journey as an "internally displaced person" --an IDP in humanitarian agency shorthand, a statistic in Yemen's war."*[195]

This is an excerpt from Sala Khaled's memoir, *One of 3.65 Million Stories: A Yemeni Journey of Displacement.* His home, Taiz, is a governorate located south of Sana'a along the Red Sea. Prior to the conflict, "[Taiz] was known for Saber Mountain, a weekend picnic destination overlooking the city of 600,000, and for its salty, smoked cheese that is eaten with sweets and chutney. Now, it is known for its ever-present frontlines and humanitarian crises."[196] Before his relocation to Amman, Khaled and his family resided in the Jabal Zaid camp for internally displaced people located in the Taiz governorate. Khaled's account is filled with airstrikes, chaos, and many forced relocations in an effort to escape the conflict's frontlines. When his memoir was published in 2020, five years into the conflict, an estimated 3.65 million Yemenis had been displaced.

As coined by Khaled, the 'Yemeni Diaspora' left millions of people helpless in an attempt to escape the conflict's violence, instability, and chaos. Those left destitute by the

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[194] "OHCHR | About Internally Displaced Persons." United Nations Human Rights . Accessed March 24, 2022. https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-internally-displaced-persons/about-internally-displaced-persons.

[195] Khaled, Sala. "One of 3.65 Million Stories: A Yemeni Journey of Displacement." Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies, January 7, 2020. https://sanaacenter.org/publications/analysis/8593.

[196] Khaled, Sala. "One of 3.65 Million Stories: A Yemeni Journey of Displacement." Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies, January 7, 2020. https://sanaacenter.org/publications/analysis/8593.

conflict may fall under one of two categories: refugee or Internally Displaced Persons (IDP). Although fleeing persecution, IDPs do not fall into the current legal definition of a refugee based on the fact that they have not crossed a recognized international border.[197] Although both populations are vulnerable and have lost their residence, those who gained refugee status are protected under the authority of international treaties, organizations, and laws such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Protocol of 1967.[198] IDPs, on the other hand, lack protections given to refugees and are protected only by their state's laws. Based on the notion of sovereignty, one of the UN's key principles, IDPs remain under the authority of their national government.[199] As a result, the international community and UN can do very little, if anything, to assist this population. The instability brought on by the conflict has crippled the state's function, hailing it the third most vulnerable state on the state index.[200] Its status as a fragile state coupled with opposition forces destroying humanitarian aid as a weapon of war, has made IDPs suffer greater than the general population.[201] According to the UNHCR, the "overwhelming majority of IDPs are women and children who are especially at risk of abuse of their human rights…More often than refugees, the internally displaced tend to remain close to or become trapped in zones of conflict, caught in the crossfire and at risk of being used as pawns,

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[197] "OHCHR | About Internally Displaced Persons." United Nations Human Rights. Accessed March 24, 2022. https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-internally-displaced-persons/about-internally-displaced-persons.

[198] "OHCHR | About Internally Displaced Persons." United Nations Human Rights. Accessed March 24, 2022. https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-internally-displaced-persons/about-internally-displaced-persons.

[199] "OHCHR | About Internally Displaced Persons." United Nations Human Rights. Accessed March 24, 2022. https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-internally-displaced-persons/about-internally-displaced-persons.

[200] Sharpe, Helen M. "Aiding the Internally Displaced People and Refugees in Yemen: ODUMUNC 2019 Issue Brief for the Human Rights Council." *ODU Model United Nations Society,* 2019.

[201] Sharpe, Helen M. "Aiding the Internally Displaced People and Refugees in Yemen: ODUMUNC 2019 Issue Brief for the Human Rights Council." *ODU Model United Nations Society,* 2019.

targets or human shields by the belligerents."[202] As social systems are disrupted, an individual's vulnerability increases. For this population, child marriage becomes a coping mechanism.

In 2020, the Central Statistical Office and the Women's Refugee Commission conducted a study on the prevalence of child marriage in IDP populations. The study revealed that child marriage was highest among internally displaced persons revealing that about one in five displaced women were young brides as opposed to one in eight in adjacent communities. The study also found that the mean age of marriage is lower in IDP communities (16.1).[203] In the *Journal of Refugee Studies,* a mix-methods study on the ongoing conflict concluded that displaced groups suffer higher rates of child marriage and, according to data collected, displaced women between the ages of 10-19 have the highest likelihood of being in a marriage.[204] A 2017 report conducted by UNICEF, cited displacement as both a driver and a moderator of child marriage due its "disruption to communal and social systems of support, care and protection of girls, as well as increased financial insecurity within households."[205] In other words, forced displacement brings additional vulnerabilities ranging from "severe violence to longer-term challenges around legal documentation."[206] Taken together, these findings suggest that "those

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[202] "OHCHR | About Internally Displaced Persons." United Nations Human Rights . Accessed March 24, 2022. https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-internally-displaced-persons/about-internally-displaced-persons.

[203] "Child Marriage in Humanitarian Settings in the Arab States ..." Women's Refugee Commission, December 2020. https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Child-marriage-Arab-states-synthesis-report-FINAL.pdf.

[204] Hunersen, Kara, Bothaina Attal, Allison Jeffery, Janna Metzler, Tareq Alkibsi, Shatha Elnakib, and W Courtland Robinson. "Child Marriage in Yemen: A Mixed Methods Study in Ongoing Conflict and Displacement." OUP Academic. Oxford University Press, February 2, 2021. https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/34/4/4551/6126388.

[205] 'Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa – Yemen Country Brief', United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Middle East and North Africa Regional Office in collaboration with the International Center for Research on Women (IRCW), 2017.

[206] Hunersen, Kara, Bothaina Attal, Allison Jeffery, Janna Metzler, Tareq Alkibsi, Shatha Elnakib, and W Courtland Robinson. "Child Marriage in Yemen: A Mixed Methods Study in Ongoing Conflict and Displacement." OUP Academic. Oxford University Press, February 2, 2021. https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/34/4/4551/6126388.

who remain geographically close to the conflict face increased risk of child marriage" and that displacement "impacts child marriage patterns and practices."[207]Forced displacement, and the ongoing conflict coupled with the existing practice of child marriage has created an increase in the negative coping mechanism.

Present in host and IDP communities were entrenched gender norms, which impacted guardians' decision to marry women below the age of majority. A norm cited among the IDP populations interviewed was the belief that women should be confined to the domestic sphere and submissive. One IDP man states, "There are no girls who refuse. A woman is a woman. Her only choice is the husband or the grave."[208] Although this quote is explicit, the majority of IDPs interviewed cited fears of daughters never marrying and "marrying them off early to ensure their future."[209]

Other cultural factors such as honor and virginity were also cited as justifications for a family's decision to marry their daughter. For internally displaced groups, "parents are fearful for girls' safety and their "honor" and use marriages to provide for and safeguard their daughters."[210] These fears were increased among individuals once displaced and caused families

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[207] "Child Marriage in Humanitarian Settings in the Arab States ..." Women's Refugee Commission, December 2020. https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Child-marriage-Arab-states-synthesis-report-FINAL.pdf.

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[210] Karasapan, Omer, and Sajjad Shah. "Forced Displacement and Child Marriage: A Growing Challenge in Mena." Brookings. Brookings, March 9, 2022. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2019/06/19/forced-displacement-and-child-marriage-a-growing-challenge-in-mena/.

to marry women at much younger ages. In the *Journal of Refugee Studies,* the displaced people interviewed described their weariness of living in proximity to strangers. Due to this inflated "perception of risk of sexual harassment to daughters; having a husband was seen as a protective factor that would alleviate these concerns."[211] As such, marrying their young daughter was utilized as a protective mechanism. One mother said, "The marriage has increased because the people are afraid for the girl, especially when they hear the rumors that the houses have been attacked, so it is better to marry the girl to be protected by her husband."[212] These fears were not just confined to guardians and parents of daughters, as the girls themselves were fearful of sexual harassment and assault as well. For young women, "the biggest impact of displacement was increased fear of sexual harassment."[213] Fears of threats to honor were confined only to young women, "highlighting a factor in the perceived need to marry girls at a younger age than boys."[214]

In the study conducted by the *Journal of Refugee Studies,* economics was cited as a major concern for this population who expressed that the lack of basic resources impacted their decision to use early marriage as a tool to cope with their financial stresses and circumstances. One IDP participant stated, "We are displaced persons because of the material need, dispersion,

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[211] Hunersen, Kara, Bothaina Attal, Allison Jeffery, Janna Metzler, Tareq Alkibsi, Shatha Elnakib, and W Courtland Robinson. "Child Marriage in Yemen: A Mixed Methods Study in Ongoing Conflict and Displacement." OUP Academic. Oxford University Press, February 2, 2021. https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/34/4/4551/6126388.

[212] Hunersen, Kara, Bothaina Attal, Allison Jeffery, Janna Metzler, Tareq Alkibsi, Shatha Elnakib, and W Courtland Robinson. "Child Marriage in Yemen: A Mixed Methods Study in Ongoing Conflict and Displacement." OUP Academic. Oxford University Press, February 2, 2021. https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/34/4/4551/6126388.

[213] Hunersen, Kara, Bothaina Attal, Allison Jeffery, Janna Metzler, Tareq Alkibsi, Shatha Elnakib, and W Courtland Robinson. "Child Marriage in Yemen: A Mixed Methods Study in Ongoing Conflict and Displacement." OUP Academic. Oxford University Press, February 2, 2021. https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/34/4/4551/6126388.

[214] Hunersen, Kara, Bothaina Attal, Allison Jeffery, Janna Metzler, Tareq Alkibsi, Shatha Elnakib, and W Courtland Robinson. "Child Marriage in Yemen: A Mixed Methods Study in Ongoing Conflict and Displacement." OUP Academic. Oxford University Press, February 2, 2021. https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/34/4/4551/6126388.

and instability. After displacement, we need the money more than before to relieve the burdens on the fathers."[215] As such, having a secure source of income was a facilitator that impacted the male guardians' decision to use marriage to relieve the financial burden. These thoughts were expressed more "frequently among IDPs since they believed that their instability made them more desperate than their host counterparts."[216] Further, marriage to local men was utilized as a tool to gain community acceptance and 'kinship'.

As stated in the previous section, education plays a vital role in the practice of child marriage. For displaced populations, this fact persists. Many IDP adults found that education was more important for men, prioritizing their education over young girls "since they would be the main source of income for their households, and that when faced with economic instability after displacement, they will be more inclined to marry their daughters early."[217] This not only widens the already present gap of educational attainment between male and females, but also deepens existing socio-cultural norms which confines women's mobility and autonomy. In the mix-methods study, it was surveyed that among IDP child brides, 74 percent of them had not completed secondary education.[218] IDP families who were inclined to enroll their daughter in school were faced with several obstacles due to lack of residency.

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[215] Hunersen, Kara, Bothaina Attal, Allison Jeffery, Janna Metzler, Tareq Alkibsi, Shatha Elnakib, and W Courtland Robinson. "Child Marriage in Yemen: A Mixed Methods Study in Ongoing Conflict and Displacement." OUP Academic. Oxford University Press, February 2, 2021. https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/34/4/4551/6126388.

[216] Hunersen, Kara, Bothaina Attal, Allison Jeffery, Janna Metzler, Tareq Alkibsi, Shatha Elnakib, and W Courtland Robinson. "Child Marriage in Yemen: A Mixed Methods Study in Ongoing Conflict and Displacement." OUP Academic. Oxford University Press, February 2, 2021. https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/34/4/4551/6126388.

[217] Hunersen, Kara, Bothaina Attal, Allison Jeffery, Janna Metzler, Tareq Alkibsi, Shatha Elnakib, and W Courtland Robinson. "Child Marriage in Yemen: A Mixed Methods Study in Ongoing Conflict and Displacement." OUP Academic. Oxford University Press, February 2, 2021. https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/34/4/4551/6126388.

[218] Hunersen, Kara, Bothaina Attal, Allison Jeffery, Janna Metzler, Tareq Alkibsi, Shatha Elnakib, and W Courtland Robinson. "Child Marriage in Yemen: A Mixed Methods Study in Ongoing Conflict and Displacement." OUP Academic. Oxford University Press, February 2, 2021. https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/34/4/4551/6126388.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis, two key research questions were presented to analyze child marriage in Yemen. First, has child marriage increased during the Yemen Civil War, and second, what factors contribute to the increase of this practice? The case of the Yemen Civil War demonstrates that child marriage and armed conflict have a correlated relationship, in which conflict shocks preexisting societal conditions, strengthening the practice. Conflict creates new drivers which increase womens' vulnerability to early marriage.

It was evident that child marriage was both an understudied and under-researched phenomenon. National data on child marriage was limited and not recorded after the conflict's escalation in 2015. As a result, data on child marriage after this point was confined to key informant interviews and evidence reviews conducted by non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations. Further, during times of conflict, data is inconsistent and fails to incorporate nuances integral to the study of this issue.

Owing to the conflict's ongoing nature, academic books on child marriage during the Yemen Civil War were not available. As a result, it was difficult to fully capture the scale of the conflict's impact on early marriage patterns. To better contextualize this, a comparison of marriage patterns in Yemen to other conflicts of the past was included in this study.

The Yemen Civil War is a tale told through bombings, proxy wars, and powers battling over regional hegemonic control. The conflict's impact is assessed through the severity and scale of militarization and missile strikes. Because of this, the majority of national data surrounding the conflict fails to incorporate a gendered lens, rarely addressing the conflict's impact on gender-based violence. Through this incomplete picture, a shadow has been cast over the

experiences and lives of many young women living through the conflict. Women in Yemen are the most vulnerable population. They have been forgotten and overlooked by the international community; they have become the forgotten daughters.

Governments and aid organizations should recognize that child marriage is a humanitarian concern in addition to a developing human rights issue. Findings for the first question suggest that although the rates of child marriage increased, this was not a problem confined to the ongoing conflict. This thesis recommends an increase in the education and awareness of child marriage consequences. Such a prevention strategy should begin with religious and chief leaders who play an integral role in forming marriage unions. Humanitarian and multilateral organizations must educate themselves on the cultural makeup of Yemen, as this is integral to successful efforts. Attention should also be placed on educating communities on the temporary and exploitative nature of Tourist Marriages.

To date, there is no support from the Yemeni state to help institute programs to empower survivors of abusive relationships; specifically, providing victims of Tourist Marriages with the proper resources and rehabilitation they need once they have been severed from these marriages.

Maximized efforts should be exerted on reinstituting formal primary education and ensuring its access to all citizens. Governments and organizations should collaborate to develop retention strategies to ensure girls stay in school. Retention strategies include financial incentives for families to keep young women in school, subsidies for the cost of uniforms and textbooks, and modes of transportation if needed.

Finally, advocacy to end child marriage in armed conflicts should extend beyond internal efforts. Yemen, a civil war as well as a proxy war, involve several actors who have contributed to the militarization, humanitarian crisis, and prolonged nature of the conflict. Owing to the

interconnected nature of child marriage and armed conflict, efforts to end military engagement can sooner result in peace-building efforts, restoring the security of the Yemeni state and its people.

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